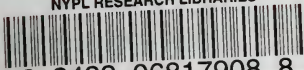


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RELIGION AND ITS WORTH

RELIGION FOR MEN

BY

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PREFACE

The attitude of the average man of to-day toward the Christian religion is not one of open hostility but rather one of careless indifference. Actual atheism is very largely a thing of the past, and while multitudes of men live as though "there is no God," only here and there is one who openly avows his denial of a belief in God. The average man leaves God out of the affairs of his life, not by any carefully defined plan or purpose but simply by neglect. Prof. James wrote that if actions dictated by religion are not different from those dictated by irreligion then religion is a superfluity. So, if the life of any man is not made to differ by his religious faith he might as well have no faith.

There are several controlling reasons why many men are thus so indifferent. Probably the undue emphasis that has been placed in the past upon denominational differences has

been a large contributor. The neglect of ethical and practical teaching has been another. And a third is the mistaken but not surprising idea that religion is unscientific.

But whatever the reasons, a majority of the men of our day apparently consider the question of their personal relation to Christ and His Church as non-essential to them in their busy lives. The writer has been through the trials that accompany the journey from an inherited faith to an intelligent conviction that the Christian religion is the most reasonable and just guide of life. In writing this book he invites men that may be in doubt to give the effort and the time to follow the thread and see for themselves whether there is not for them a present comfort and a sure ground of hope, in the Christian religion.

ALVAH S. HOBART.

Chester, Pa., 1912.

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RELIGION AND ITS WORTH

Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.— Ps. 90: 1.

CHAPTER I

RELIGION AND ITS WORTH

IT is a matter of great regret that because some minor idea of religion is either being questioned or disputed men are tempted to put the whole matter of religion into the class of uncertain or unimportant things.

Because of this tendency the reader is asked to consider the advantages there are in religion. He is not asked to consider any system of theology, though theologies are important; nor any ceremonies, however important; nor any church connection, though also valuable; but that phase and part of religion which a man may take with him into his office, into the woods of the North, into the jungles of Africa, on the cars, or into the sick bed. Religion as it is here considered is not any form of worship, but that which gives vitality to all forms; not some

way of explaining religious opinions, or feelings, but that underlying something which, though real and mighty in our thinking, is a mystery to us all. The feeling which the poet Bryant described as follows:

“The groves were God’s first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them — ere he framed
The lofty vault to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems — in the darkling wood,
Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influences
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place,
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty.”

That was religion in the raw material,— in the savage mind — chiefly reverence and awe. The Hebrew psalmist was clearer in his idea: “Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, even there shall thy hand lead me,

and thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. 139.) That is religion somewhat refined and has comfort in it, and ethical value. Religion as we are now considering it, in the words of President Dodge, my honored teacher in college,

"Is the sense of a good power above us, an authority over us, and a goal before us."

I

This recognition of a great Superintendent has several prizes to give the man that has it. Chiefly it saves him from the sense of utter chaos in human history.

In our day we are in touch with all the world and its tumults. This morning, in the offices of the great newspapers, they know what took place in China yesterday, and we shall know to-night. We cannot be isolated. Men read history now more than they used to read it, and it presents great perplexity. Not long since, a professor in the University of Pennsylvania discovered in the mounds of an ancient Babylonian city, hundreds of little earthen tablets on which

were written, in strange characters, and in a strange language, the records of human lives centuries ago. Here are public documents, and business correspondence, and love letters from young men to young maidens. Love letters 4,000 years old! bearing testimony that human love was the same then as now.

These ruins are evidences of a civilization in some particulars as good as ours. Here are houses furnished with water and drainage. Here are tunnels through which the water and drainage pipes run, so they can be repaired without digging up the streets as we must do. That civilization implies toil and ambition, comfort and weariness. It had expenses, and taxes, and business activity. It meant, as ours does, a medley of joy and sorrow. But that great city, and its civilization, for 3,000 years dropped out of the world's thought.

Other nations also have risen to prominence, and fallen to abject unworthiness. They grew and became great. They builded cities like Babylon; they framed laws that

were excellent, likes the code of Hammurabi; they had a sort of literature and saved it in libraries. And then, by causes that we do not know, they passed out of sight. Their civilization is known only by reason of the curious spade of the archæologist. Not a soul for thirty centuries, until the last century, has spoken their language, or read one of their tablets. Not a soul claims a blood relation with them now. Nineveh, Assyria, Damascus, Carthage, Luxor, ancient Rome shared to a great degree in the same fate. Every thinking reader of their history is led to ask, "Is there any thread of purpose that binds these strange catastrophes together? Was there left from that dissolving civilization any residuum of goodness or wisdom which justifies their having been in the world?"

These families lived and longed, toiled and triumphed for a time, and then passed out of sight and thought. What is the meaning of it all? Is such life worth living? That question troubles us. If there is no destiny then the ox has the better of us, for

he fears not death, and he may do good after he dies,— we may eat him.

The student of history who has a place for God in his thinking regards the whole stream of history as moving towards a God-appointed destiny. He does not for a moment think that he or his fellow-men are the sport of uncontrolled forces or that men live in vain. We see trees leave out and become luxuriant in summer; and in the autumn their leaves fall silent on our heads, then rustle under our feet, then pass into mold and native dust. But we are not perplexed by it for we know that each leaf by its summer's work has left its twig a little longer, and the tree a little larger. Human history has a purpose. Neander said in his history of the Church, "I desire to testify to that which constitutes the center and goal of history, namely the Christian age of the world whose dawn already greets us from afar." D'Aubigne, in his history of the Reformation, says that he does not enter into rivalry with other historians, but he makes an exception in favor of the "principle on which

his history is founded." Others had strung the record of events in order like beads on a cord; but it all had no meaning, no message to convey. To read it had not much more value than a game of solitaire. When one had read the whole of it he would say, "Well, what of it all? It has stated no purpose; it has discovered no goal; it has won no victory." D'Aubigne wrote to tell the tale of God's work in the history of men. The chronicles of ancient times were written to tell the deeds of the various kings. They are called annals. History is, if properly considered and written, The Annals of God.

The Chinese nation! What a wonder it is! For 3,000 years it has been perfecting a civilization that in many respects is better than ours. It has learned to obey law, to restrain passions, to live in society without any large standing army, and no navy until modern nations touched it. And now, as a rose bud that has been making its beauty and fragrance all in secret opens some June morning and we say, "O, the beauty of the rose," so this nation, held back by the hand

of a power over it, and a destiny ahead of it, in this time, when as never before the Christian world is ready to use the opportunity, opens its doors to light. The leaven that throws off old forms and old superstitions, and wants the things of God has been working. What deep sense of wonder comes when we see this hand of Providence in history! Men who do not know God are to read in history and learn about Him. That gives a meaning to life affairs among men. God through them is working out His purposes. We see a stately drama on the world's stage. Centuries, nations, religions more or less correct come on the stage, act their part and pass off. But the great drama of God goes on.

Paul wrote that his part in history was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God." That is, the world is a stage on which, for the benefit of the heavenly intelligences, the grace and glory of God

are made manifest and illustrated by His kindness toward men in Jesus Christ.

II

Another good that comes from this sense of God is a protection from the sense of unendurable chaos in individual life.

We live in what, from some standpoints, seems to be a jarring, wrangling conflict of forces and agencies. There is sorrow in every home. Sadness in every heart. Of all the people we meet or see in our streets every one is a victim to some degree, and in some way, of sickness or of sin. As Paul, quoting the psalmist wrote, "There is none righteous, no not one, they are all gone out of the way." Every good we know may become an evil. Frugality overdone becomes stinginess, and covetousness. Kindness untempered with wisdom becomes harmful. Help to the poor may beggar them. Forgiveness without repentance becomes encouragement to sin. Truth-telling without discrimination becomes brutality. In the

heart of every virtue hides the bacillus of sin, which under favoring circumstances saps its vitality. Even religious worships unconsciously change themselves into formalisms and superstitions, and may bind the once free souls of men with fetters of bondage hard to be borne. We sometimes ask in our bewilderment, Is this a good world? Are we living in a good order of things? Or is this a demonized world?

Has evil won in the horrid feud
Of ages with the throne?
Does evil stand on the neck of good
And rule the world alone?

And we almost reply,

There is no good, there is no God,
And faith is a heartless cheat
Who bares the back for the devil's rod
And scatters thorns for the feet.*

We seek for some thread to follow that will lead us out of the labyrinth of mystery; for some point of view from which the turmoil will appear to have a plan and an inner working purpose!

* J. G. Holland in *Bitter Sweet*.

But the sense of God gives an assurance that through all, and over all, and in all, there is a plan and purpose. The undercurrent of such religion refuses to think that the world is a junketing party, which starts out to go nowhere, and has no definite returning place or time. Or that it is a chaos of forces in which the mighty and the less mighty move about with no destination. In moments of trial we may be tempted to say so; but before we do a voice from greater depths says, "No, God is, and God is good!" Farmers have poor crops, but they sow again because they think that on the whole God reigns. Business men lose, but they try again because they think that laws of trade remain. Men get into trouble and would be despairing but for a deep-seated confidence that there is a way out into light. Almost unconsciously, but correctly, men complete the arch of their thinking with the keystone of conviction that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him. Many have had similar experiences. There have been times when troubles came

and all looked dark, but they went out in the morning with a soft sweet song of trust in the heart that God is. And that trust gave courage. In the dangers that surround them men go at best into the darkness. Every morning they go to business not knowing what a day may bring forth. Reverses, sickness, accidents, betrayed trusts, unlooked-for deaths,—all these hover like vultures over them, and they know not when some one or more will descend. But they gird on the armor of faith and go out cheerfully, because deep down they have a conviction that God reigns and God is good.

Christian parents hopefully send out their sons and daughters into the dangerous world, beyond their care or protection. The mother of Washington when he was sent out to the frontier to fight Indians, putting her hand on his shoulder said, "God is our trust. To Him I commit you." How sad it would be if she could not commit him to the care of a God of righteousness! How sad if a mother's prayers were but wasted breath! But they have God as a dwelling place.

III

'Another installment of good is that it saves from lonesomeness of unanswered affection.

A yearning for someone to love us is a very noticeable fact in our life. Many a poor fellow in a great city finds satisfaction in the affections of a dog;—the dog licks the hand that cuffs him; and never turns state's evidence. Children try to get responses from their pets, and look into their eyes to see some return of affection. What farmer boy never put his arms around the neck of his pet cow or horse, and looked long into its deep eyes, and was glad to think that his love was returned? That desire for affection is only embryonic in the boy, and

“When the stern realities of life do clip the wings of fancy,
And the cold storms rack the worn cordage of the heart,
It breathes a healing essence and a strengthening charm
Next to the hope of heaven.”*

Man in all the fullness of his powers; in moments of solitude, away from the din of popular applause, away from the profusion

* Mrs. Sigourney.

of men's praise, stretches the hands upward for the approval of some superior being whom he can adore. With all his attainments there is a cry for some higher personality in whom he can confide, and into whose ears he can pour the woes of his soul, and whom he thinks loves him. And when a man realizes that a God above cares for him, that in any way he bears friendly relations to that God, he can walk fearless through deserts dark and drear. He "shall run and not be weary, and he shall walk and not faint."

How sweet it is to walk among the trees and flowers; to revel in the sunshine; to hear the singing of birds; and feel that the Author of all is a wondrous person who knows and cares for *me*. There are moments of delight when men praise our efforts. It is sweet to find a human soul that loves with an unselfish and loyal affection. But there is no experience in which one's heart thrills with such calm delight, such deep and potent joy, as when he realizes that God loves him.

And there are no moments when the soul

droops so low, and the springs of life's best ambitions run so scanty, as when one thinks that heaven has no ear to hear, and no eye to pity and no hand to help. Hume, one of the great English philosophers who had succeeded in ridding himself of all that he once thought of God, writing to a friend said, "I cannot express to you the intense loneliness to which my philosophy has brought me." "The great Companion," said another, "is gone from my soul." Religion saves us from that loneliness.

Compare the expressions of individuals before recognizing this care of God with their feelings after doing so. Here is Paul in the 7th of Romans, groaning under the fact that he finds in him a law warring against his better self. He finds no way of escape. He cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?" And then as if in his imagination he saw deliverance coming, he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ." (Rom. 8:1.)

Here is Newman, the cardinal. His hymn is said to be his own heart history:

“Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead thou me on;
 The night is dark, and I am far from home;
 Lead thou me on:

.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
 Shouldst lead me on;
 I loved to choose and see my path; but now
 Lead thou me on.”

Contrast this with Darwin's experiences:

“When I reflect upon the difficulty of conceiving this wonderful universe as a work of chance, I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man, and I deserve to be called a theist; but later that conviction has become weaker and now (1876) I must be content to remain an agnostic.” Again (1885) he said, “It often comes over me with overwhelming force that this world is not made by chance. But at other times it seems to go away.”

How different the tone of Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829), “A firm religious belief makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes when all earthly ones vanish and throws over the decay the most

gorgeous of all lights; awakens life even in death and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument of torture and shame a ladder of ascent to paradise; and far above all combinations of earthly hopes calls up the most delightful visions of palms and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, the security of everlasting joys, where the skeptic, and the sensualist view only gloom and despair."

IV

Another installment is that this confidence in God saves our ethical life from weakness and degeneration. Or, to put it in another way, it gives us moral back-bone.

There is a theory of morals which says that the thing which gives most happiness, and saves us most from pain is right. The way to know the right is to estimate the pain or pleasure. There is much truth in that. In many cases we know that the true test of conduct is results. Jesus said we test teachers by the fruit of their teaching. Probably very good results would come to a community

if all would follow this kind of moral expediency. But there would be missing from our estimate a certain element which gives religious morality a glory that excels all others. The man who does right just because it is right — just because he thinks God wants it done — that man feels a dignity which no other man knows. He walks like a king, with his head erect and his heart light.

It may be sometimes difficult to determine what is right in the eyes of God, yet there are great moral concepts which all men call right. And to be reverent, to be truthful, to be honest, to be clean, to be loyal to friends, to be chivalric, because these are right — that kind of coin passes at full value under all moral systems with or without the Decalogue. This is about the same as conscientiousness. It gives virility to public and to private morals. Morality without religious sanction must become enervated. If a clerk's faithfulness has no reason except that you pay him well, then when he can get more money by being unfaithful he will do it. If any man is honest only because it is the best

policy, he will be dishonest when it is policy to be so.

I was once conducted through the chamber containing trophies of the government detective office, until I was tired at the signs of so much painstaking rascality. Col. Brooks, the chief of the detective service, was my companion. I said to him, "Colonel, I should think you would lose your confidence in humanity by being constantly in contact with rascals." "Oh, no," said he, "I never had any. Every man has his price. It may be money, or ambition, or revenge, but he can be bought." I was astonished, for he was a Christian man, and I was about to ask him what price would buy him, but he spoke again, finishing his sentence — "Except the religious man. He has something that holds him steadfast." That is true.

But I should probably be misunderstood if I should prolong this list of advantages for the man who follows natural religion. And I fear I may be if I stop here. I am quite sure that some Christian man has already begun to think that I am substituting natural

for Christian religion. I want, therefore, to consider the Christian religion as related to this natural religion. Christianity is unique. It is the one most beautiful blossom of natural religion. One cannot study a tree thoroughly without studying all of it. One cannot know a fruit well unless he knows the tree it grew on. The tree on which Christian religion grows is natural religion. You can have the tree without the fruit but you cannot have the fruit without the tree. A man may be religious and not be Christian; he cannot be Christian and not be religious. Socrates was religious but he was not Christian for Christ was not made known to him. I wish he could have known Jesus. He would have said, "My King, my King."

All the language of the New Testament implies that Christ was a helper for men who knew God *some* and wanted to know him *more*. Jesus himself said to some, "Ye are not of God or ye would believe on me." That is, men needed to be religious in this fundamental way as a preparation to accept Christ.

This should lead those of us who have taken what we may call the Christian degree in religion to have great patience with those who have as yet only the first degrees. We all came through the same sort of initiation. Some of us took all the degrees in a few days, others were a long time in getting to our present position, but we took the preliminary ones first.

And so I would urge men with all my powers to yield to the leadings of the natural feeling of religion. Yield to the idea that God is and that He is good. Cultivate it. Follow its impulses. It will be a dwelling place for your soul. I wish I could make all my readers do that much. It would be to their souls like showers upon the mown grass. It would make songs break out in the night. It would exalt life in all its departments. I believe it would lead them to Christ.

I do not ask men to take my theology, or to join my church, though I wish they would. But I plead with them to follow their own theology; not their philosophy, nor their unbeliefs, but that which lies deep down in their

hearts. Following that light leads to more. When the sense of God sweeps over your soul as you see the beauties of the world or feel the goodness of life, then give thanks (Rom. 1); then pray to your God,— not to mine but to yours,— and you will soon find a comfort and a shelter which will make you understand the psalmist, and make you say 'Amen when he says, "God is our dwelling place." In thought of Him you will find comfort and shelter.

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION
ABOUT THE DIVINE

SUGGESTION

The invisible things of God, since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made.—ROM. 1:20.

God, having of old time spoken unto the Fathers in the Prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.—HEB. 1:1.

O taste and see that the Lord is good.—Ps. 34:8.

CHAPTER II

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIVINE

RELIGION, says Prof. James, is a set of experiences in the presence of what we think of as "divine." The character then of a man's religion is measured by what he thinks about his "divinity." The Japanese who pictures his "divinity" as a great serpent, and the man who has Jesus as the "visible image" of his "divinity" are as far apart in their religion as Jesus and the serpent. The whole matter hinges upon this idea of the divine.

So it comes about that the sources of information about the "divinity" are important.

I

The word of Paul was, "*The invisible things of God are clearly seen in the things*

that are made.” The same truth was declared by the psalmist when he wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. One day uttereth speech to another day, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” (Ps. 19.) That is, nature is a source of information about God. This is not an arbitrary revelation, it is perfectly in accord with all that we know about one another. Men’s conceptions and characters are revealed through their acts. The ancient painters of Madonnas painted their faces as expressionless as the face of a Chinese doll. They have no significance except the absence of significance. There is no beauty — no attractiveness. The reason was, they had no clear conception of what they wanted to portray in their minds. Mary, the mother of Jesus, must be sinless, and yet human. She must not have passion, nor fear, nor undue affection. They did not, could not clearly conceive of such a woman. So they painted a face of no expression.

The man who wrote the great oratorio of

the Messiah could not have been a small, or an irreligious man. He shows that he took in the whole sweep of the redemptive work. From the prophetic "Comfort ye my people" on through the story of the birth, and the "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow," up to the great Hallelujah Chorus, and the "Blessing and honor be unto him that sitteth on the throne," the author sees and feels the sweetness and the majesty of his theme. We know that he was a man of sensitive religious spirit, and far-reaching, spiritual insight, besides being a master of musical science. The invisible things of Handel are seen in his work.

Suppose that in some wilderness of Africa we should find a deserted village. In it is a house built and furnished, but left for years without occupants. And we find that it is built on strong foundations; the windows are square and plumb, the sills in line and level; the inside trim is well put in, the material is all good, the joints as well made in the closets as in the parlor. We should say the builder was not a contractor, driven by a close com-

petition to skimp his work, but that he delighted in good work for the sake of the goodness of it. The invisible love of thoroughness is manifest in the things he made. We go into the kitchen and find every convenience for doing the work quickly and easily. We say that man cared for the comfort of the women; the invisible things of affection for his wife are manifest in the things that he made in the kitchen. We go upstairs and find the children's rooms; and there are books, and athletic contrivances, and musical instruments, and we say the invisible things of intelligent love for children are manifest in the things that are made in the children's rooms. We find good rooms for the help, and we say the invisible things of a proper regard for them are seen in the provision made for them. We study the surroundings, and find that walks and flowers and shade have been provided, and we say the invisible love of landscape is manifest in the things that are made in the fields. So we could write a pretty fair estimate of him who in that place built that house, and we

should know for a certainty that no man-eating savage built it, but some intelligent man from a civilized country.

So is it with the Maker of heaven and earth. What sort of a person He is we can learn in quite a full manner by considering what He has made. Let us note some of His works. He has made us, and we are persons, that is, we are self-conscious beings, having intelligence, will, affections, and "power to bring things to pass." Therefore God is a personal being, for it is inconceivable that the creator be less than his creations. Heaven and earth then, are filled with the oversight, and insight of One who has purposes, and is "bringing things to pass."

And He is a loving being. Someone has said that nature has no signs of affection, but only tokens of the unswerving, merciless forces of nature which grind to powder all that get in their way. But what is more affectionate than the love and loyalty of the birds for their young? How industrious they are! Watch the work of the robin to

fill the hungry mouths of her young. Or listen to the chatter of the sparrows, awake and at work before we are up. He that made such shall not He love His creatures?

And forgiveness,—“the great gospel blessing”—how nature heals the wounds we make and, within limits, forgives our sins against her laws!

And prayer—How we are taught to make our legitimate petitions, in a legitimate way, and the forces of earth, air and sky spring with alacrity to answer them with grain and flower and fruit!

Does not nature teach us resurrection of the dead? The grass that turns brown in autumn comes forth in spring from the same root, clad in the green of summer. The wheat that is put into the ground “dies,” but it lives again, not as a new creation, but as the extension of the life of the seed, and “every seed after its kind.” Does a man “die” and finish his existence? Or does he, like the grass and the wheat, have some power to out-live the winter of old age and to conquer decay, that he may appear again?

Surely man is not without a strong suggestion in nature that "death does not end all."

True these nature lessons are not very definite nor unmistakable. None of them is indisputable by a man who wants disputation, but they furnish a quiet, constant suggestion about the Power above us and the goal before us.

So we say: Let man seek to know the God of nature, cultivate the habit of seeing the beneficent side of creation and of the Creator, and he shall not be lost in the sense of "boundless power and inaccessible majesty," but rather shall he find it true that

"Nature has a voice of gladness, and a smile,
And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
Into his darker musings with a mild
And gentle sympathy that steals away
Their sharpness ere he is aware."

II

While this listening to the voice of nature has great value, the nations of the world have not discovered in it full satisfaction of their hunger for knowledge about the divine.

The Greeks and Romans gathered the idea of personality. They saw that there must be in the divine all that is essential in men, but the tenderer, affectionate qualities they overlooked. Back of all their mythology they conceived of Zeus, or Jupiter as one who, though he was often opposed, and irritated, by the minor divinities, was able always, when he was thoroughly aroused, to outwit, and outdo all his opposers. He was almighty and all-knowing; but the adjective all-merciful did not belong to him. He had his friends but they were few. So the best of men needed some revelation.

The Bible is to us the source of more definite information. It brings to us a clearness and definiteness of knowledge which the book of nature does not furnish. The character of God may be from nature quite clearly inferred, but the plans of God are not written in that book.

The Bible records revelations of various things. Things were told to men of old which they could not have discovered from the most reverent study of nature. The

moral teaching of the Bible may be called the fruit of the tree of nature. It is nourished by it, but it has elements different from it. We could have the tree without the fruit; but we could not have the fruit without the tree. In the Bible we get both the statement of what God would do, and the record of how it would be done. God's plans, and His methods are found here — we get a much fuller knowledge of Him. There is less inference, and more concreteness — nature would not tell us about one godly family, and how they lived and grew. We could not learn from the study of flowers how righteousness, and unrighteousness work out in individual or society life. No hint comes in nature that such an one as Jesus would come into human history and be so mighty a leaven to change the character of human ideals. How does He feel toward us? What does He have in mind concerning us? Those are questions about vital things in our religion.

The Bible is calculated to give us that information — its great value is in its picture

of God. As a history of men and things it is a valuable book. It is old, and reliable, and intelligent. But it was not written to be a history as men write history. It tells about great men and does not tell whence they came or where they went; they are mentioned only as they contributed to something greater. It mentions ancient nations, but it only tells of them when they affected Israel. But it gives knowledge of God, and our duty to Him very fully. As Paul wrote, the Scriptures are given that the "man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is a wonderful book for that very purpose. If your friend in a distant city desires to make you acquainted with his wife he sends to you a series of photographs. One is a front view, another a profile; one with a serious expression and another with a smile. These are accompanied with reports of her sayings, and doings. In this way you get a pretty accurate idea of her looks. So in the Bible we have many views of Him, and these combined, make us acquainted with Him; — e. g., the first Psalm

shows us what the writer thought of the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord," and who "meditates in it day and night."—"Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Isaiah 49:15-16 tells us what He thinks about the company of those who serve Him—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." What care does He have for the humble believer in Jesus? "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 18:10.) What is His attitude towards us when we have gone astray from the right way? Read Luke 15, and see how He heaps up as it were illustrations to show the unfailing sense of loss at our wanderings, and His joy at our return. But the portrait is not without signs of moral severity of character. He is angry at pretense, as shown in his repeated warnings

against hypocrisy. (Matt. 23:23-29.) He is disgusted at luke-warmness of loyalty to the right. (Rev. 3:14,15.) He condemns the man who, in his luxurious wealth, forgets the poor. (Luke 16:19-31.) He recognizes the worthlessness of orthodox thinking unless coupled with orthodox living. (Luke 10:30-37.) He declines to forgive the unforgiving. (Matt. 6:14, 15.) So as with stroke after stroke, skillfully and patiently, the painter brings out life likeness in the portrait, Jesus' words portray the character of God.

And there is no less definiteness in the teaching about our duties. All classes of men find here the guiding principles that are to be adopted in life.

And the destiny that awaits us is not overlooked. "We shall be like Christ." (I John 3:2.) "We are being transformed into his image." (II Cor. 3:18.) "He will change our bodies like unto the body of his glory." (Phil. 3:21.) "This mortal shall put on immortality." (I Cor. 15:53.) And not only individuals are to be redeemed,

but society as a whole will be renewed. For His "kingdom is to come on earth, as in heaven." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Is. 11:9.) "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." (Phil. 2:11.) And there is to be a judgment — "Every one shall confess to God." (Rom. 14:11.) "The revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. 2:5.) Such is the fullness of information about the overruling Power and Authority with whom we have to do.

The Bible should be read not chiefly to get replies to curious questionings, nor to get material for some system of theology; but to get acquainted with our heavenly Father — your heavenly Father.

Prof. Huxley (who will not be thought to have been prejudiced in favor of the Bible) said, "I advise my friends to drink deeply from the fountain itself, for the Bible contains in itself the antidote for three-fourths of the foolishness that is said about it." Dr. Wm. N. Clarke wrote, "The fact cannot be destroyed that this book brings us

our knowledge of Jesus, and brings us our best knowledge of God and the relations that we sustain to Him. Intelligent study sets this fact out in clearer and stronger light." Men, fathers, can you not find a place to read this great source of information more yourselves, and more with your families? Is it not worth while to get fresh and abundant views of your Creator's thought about *you*? Its reading will correct and complete your idea of God. You have made it from other sources; remake it from this source. Sort and sift and select from it what pictures Him. Let the Scriptures start you in an experience that sets you before the God of Grace in an "amazing beatific tranquillity," as Dr. Bushnell described it.

III

However much satisfaction the Bible may give us over and above the teachings of nature, there yet remains a desire for something beyond. It is yet second-hand to us. It is only a picture. We want the knowledge that comes from acquaintance. Can we have

that? We think of the woman at the well of Jacob, and the inhabitants of the near-by village. They said, "Now we believe not because of what you told us but because we have seen him ourselves." [(John 4.)] We want to know God for ourselves. Experience must teach us. I would write thoughtfully here, and carefully, because it is a difficult subject. We must get out of the physical realm. We speak about seeing God and hearing Him and walking with Him, and knowing Him, but all the time we remember that it is an inner seeing and hearing and walking. These things of which the Bible speaks are fully known by us only when we have experienced them. A friend of mine used to say that he thought he never knew a passage of the Bible until he had practised it. It is possible to experience many things that are real acquaintances with God,—that is with the Power above and the Authority over us.

Man may know God's forgiveness. Sometimes we have such a sense of our wrongdoing that life loses its joy. We are

like the publican who dared not lift up his face to heaven. And we go to Him in secret prayer. We confess the whole business. We ask for forgiveness and we come away from that place with a light heart. We look up. We see the sun. A new song is put in our mouth.

Dr. Finney, once an unbelieving lawyer, then a great evangelist, afterwards President of Oberlin College, said that once in his life he went into the woods to think out his own problem of religion. And after a long struggle he in his soul submitted to God, and when he came out of the woods the whole world seemed to him to be new. The clouds looked more beautiful, the birds sang more sweetly. Now he knew what the Bible meant when it said, "I will put a new song into your mouth."

Henry Ward Beecher said (at the withdrawal from the Congregational Association, 1882), "There was a time when I knew all the doctrines like a row of pins on a paper of pins. I knew them as a soldier knows his weapons, and by the time I got away from

the seminary I was sick — no tongue can tell how sick of the whole medley. And then on one memorable day, whose almost every cloud I can remember, whose high sun, and glowing firmament and waving trees are vivid yet, there arose before me, as if an angel had descended, a revelation of Christ as being God because He knew how to love a sinner. Not that He would love me when I was true and perfect, but because I was so wretched that I should die if He did not give Himself to me. Before that thought of God I bowed down in my soul, and from that hour to this it has been my very life to love and serve the all-helping and all-pitiful God."

It must be remembered that the Bible is largely a record of human experience. Its chapters begin not in a theory but in facts of life, and when a man has the facts he sees how true the record is. Many of Paul's words seem extravagant to us, but it is due to our spiritual inexperience; when we have come to his experience, they will be commonplace statements.

But the great fact is that the fountain of

experience is open to all. You can know for yourself whether the Scripture portraits are correct. The psalmist said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (Ps. 34: 8.) Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see." Jesus said, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know whether the doctrine comes from God." All other knowledge about God takes rank below this personal experience of His power in us. When a man has brought his unkind speech to God, and has found help to be kind; when he has prayed for bitterness towards an enemy to be removed, and his heart has become calm and sweet; when he has rebelled against his own lot, but in response to his prayers he becomes resigned to it: then he knows God as a "helper," a "strong tower," a "refuge," and then he has a religion that satisfies his soul. When he has gone down into the valley where the shadow of death makes it chill and dark, but has been held, and helped, he knows what the psalmist wrote about—"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Ps. 23.)

Mr. Moody used to mark his Bible in the margin opposite some verses "T. P." which meant "tried and proven." Such passages are beyond the reach of critics, or theological systems, or church boundaries. They are "sure and steadfast." So I urge you to learn of your God through experience. Use the Bible as a manual of living. Do not think of it as old-fashioned, or out-grown until you have tried it fairly. When you have learned God in that way you will walk under the sun, or amid the clouds, with calm, joyous hearts. Then you can understand the saying—"To know God and His Son Jesus Christ is life eternal." You will be tasting of it continually.

Prayer.—Help us our Father to see Thee. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things in Thy Law. May all nature speak to us more and more of Thy glory. May the heavens declare it to us, and the earth confirm the testimony. But above all may we know Thee by experience. May we have victory over ourselves and thus know Thee as our Saviour God.

THE SORROWS OF IRRELIGION
— THEIR SOURCE

SUGGESTION

Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well is there not a lifting up? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and to thee is his desire, and do thou rule over him.— GEN. 4:6.

Many terms of the gospel have in them an element of metaphor and parable. Sometimes these terms become veils that hide the truth. It would be unfortunate if one should cling to the veil and forget the truth it hides.

—PROF. RAMSAY.

CHAPTER III

THE SORROWS OF IRRELIGION — THEIR SOURCE

IN our first chapter we spoke of the comfort there is in having a trustful and obedient spirit toward what we think of as divine. In the second we noticed that the sources of knowledge about the divine One are abundant and within our reach. It follows then that if we do not have the comfort of religion the fault lies in ourselves in some way. We do not say that the sorrows of poverty are due to our fault, nor that the pains of ill health are avoidable by us all. But the sorrows of irreligion; those uncomfortable feelings of the mind; those self-accusations; those stings of conscience that rob life of its best joys, and sap its best energies — all such are due to something in ourselves.

This is an old subject. The men that in

the centuries past wrote the book of Genesis met it. They were meditative students of human experience, and endeavored also to give help to mankind in their struggle for comfort. And they discovered the root of the difficulty. Their idea about it is contained in the passage printed as the suggestion of this chapter. It does not for our purpose matter whether the story is actual history, or whether it was a pedagogical device, like the parables of Jesus, conveying instruction and fixing in memory the truth about our discomforts. It contains in crystal form fundamental facts of our life. Let us therefore think into the heart of it as a typical case.

I

The first fact of the narrative is that Cain was out of sorts with the divine One, and was in deep discomfort. The sense of a good power above was gone from his heart. To use the common phrase he "did not enjoy religion." But the reason he did not enjoy it was not because it is not enjoyable,

but because he was out of the article. His countenance was fallen. His feelings showed in his face; long-faced, glum-faced, sour-faced. Life had lost its joy for him. If someone had asked him if life was worth living he would have said, "No!"

The permanent truth is: *To be "out of sorts" with the good Power above us is to be without comfort of the deeper kind.* When a man knows in himself that he is not doing as well as the good Power appoints him; that he is not square in business, not honorable in politics, not kind to his family, not pure in his thoughts, not charitable in his judgments; when his conscience calls him to book as it sometimes does and makes him shrink from looking himself in the glass, then I say, his countenance falls.

Go out among men who are doing wrong knowingly and you see no calm faces. There are often faces excited over ambitions or over successes; but more often sad, anxious, sour faces. We listen for some songs of a high moral tone, having joy in them, but they never come. Such folk do

not sing except the light, mocking, or sensual songs. The countenances of a great part of the irreligious people of the world are "fallen." God is not to them a pleasant thought. We can approach them in conversation about the weather, and the crops, and business, and sometimes about politics, but the most careful and delicate may not intrude the subject of religion without the risk of offending them.

One would think that if we were in a home-like place, guests where good food and comfort was provided for us, and should get together on the porch after dinner in the cool of the evening, no more appropriate and acceptable topic for a few words of conversation could be found than the generous and kindly spirit of our benefactor, and the excellencies of the hostess. But here in this "world-boarding-house," in which we live as the common recipients of our heavenly Father's kindness, His name must not be mentioned. A hush comes over the company if someone does mention it. Their countenances fall and they wish "that fellow would

let the subject of religion alone." I am not speaking about the discussion of opinions, but concerning words of praise and appreciation of God's care and wisdom.

II

It is not the divine will that we remain thus sad. The searching question is, "Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well is there not a lifting up?"

That is the same as saying that it is not necessary nor according to our heavenly Father's will that we should fear and shrink from Him. We are not made to be slaves of God. Hear how the best part of the Old Testament folk spoke of Him. Put your ear to the Psalms and listen.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?"

"I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together."

"Surely God is good to Israel."

“Sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing unto the Lord all the earth.”

“Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Bless the Lord all His works in all the places of His dominion.”

Isaiah 55:12: “Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with praise. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

“Good tidings of great joy” was the announcement that came at His birth.

Isaiah 61: “The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give them a garland in place of ashes, the oil of joy in the place of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

And Jesus said in the little church at Nazareth after he had read these words from Isaiah, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your eyes.”

All these men represent the best religious life of their times, and they all felt that it

was right to rejoice before God. They did not always do it; but they always felt that they were not right when they did not do it.

And this is not a mere sentimental phase of the New Testament; it is a fundamental teaching of the New Testament that God has this specifically in mind. He said to the Jews, "If ye continue in my word ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you *free*." They replied, "We are free." He said, "He that sins is in bondage, but if I make you free you shall be free indeed."

And then Paul comes along and teaches that we do not receive the "spirit of bondage to fear," but the spirit of "adoption," which makes us call God our Father,—helps us to begin our prayers that way. It was not Jesus' thought to lead a lot of cringing captives, but free souls who stay with Him for love's sake. As the great missionary Zinzendorf said, "I am a captive chained to the chariot of Jesus, but chained with chains of love." We are not left to pray as Solomon did, "The Lord said that he would dwell in thick darkness." And then he went

on to remind God of His promises and urge Him not to break them, and to plead with Him not to turn a deaf ear to the prayers of His people, that they might offer in the temple; as if he was afraid that God would not hear and help. I am not saying that such prayer was not acceptable. It was, by reason of the faith that was in it. But it was not the kind of prayer we are taught to offer, and it reads to the instructed Christian almost like a reflection on God.

So to men and women who may have had that frame of mind which makes them want to lift up their faces to God, and fills them with a thrill of gladness when they think of Him — and have lost it — to them, I say, come the words, “Is there not a lifting up? There is an experience better than that, and you can have it. These discomforts of your irreligion are not necessarily permanent.” I am inclined to think that even the true doctrine of sin may be stated in such a way as to do harm. Many Christians seem to think it is a sort of pious duty to call themselves hard names, and to say, we are

“worms,” and “totally depraved.” But the psalmist said we are “made a little lower than the angels,” and “God’s works are put under our hands.” Jesus assumed that our nature is in God’s image. And we are to be changed in body into Christ’s glorious image. Because of this are we to think a buoyant spirit is a sign of something wrong? The old prophet said, “Why do you bow down your head like a bulrush?” It may be true that we are properly sad over our faults. The point I want to make is that we are not the more pleasing to God because of our crest-fallen state. There is a way for you to come into a joyous, open-faced relation to God. You can come where it will be a pleasure to speak of Him. You can come where the sun, moon and stars will awaken feelings of gladness. The heavens will declare to you the glory of God, and the firmament show you His handiwork. You will think of the way He has led you with thankfulness. You will greet the Sabbath day as the morning birds greet the sunrise. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

you will fear no evil, for the protecting rod, and the supporting staff of God will be there to comfort you.

III

If we do not get this "lifting up" something in us lieth at the door.

Let us consider this enemy of our peace which is thus charged with the responsibility of our long-facedness. Something ails almost everybody and everything. As the diplomatic men say, "There is something to be desired in all our affairs." There is a "worm in the bud" of all our roses. The pleasure of experience falls short of the expectations. The goods delivered in life are often below the sample of expectation.

When we turn to examine our part of this condition we blame ourselves for a large part of it. We were not as wise as we ought to have been. We did not foresee clearly. We did not follow the best voice in us. So trouble came and we blame ourselves for it. Along with this is the feeling that others blame us for it. We are conscious of com-

ing short of being and of doing what the common public expectation looks for. Just as we blame others, so we feel that others blame us. Sometimes unjustly, but in the main justly. So in the common public measurement we are deficient. Not more than fourteen ounces to the pound at best, perhaps eight will cover it all. It is a rare man who does not in his soul feel that he sometimes comes short of the public requirement in some things, and who does not feel that the public standard condemns him as a "come-shorter" or worse, a transgressor. And when we get alone with our God and put ourselves in imagination where His eye searches through and through our naked spirits, reading all our motives, and knowing all our thoughts, then we understand what the psalmist meant when he cried, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me."

It is not "bad luck" that makes it,—luck is the old word for "providence." In Tyn-dale's translation of the Bible in 1625, where our book reads, "Joseph prospered for the Lord was with him," he translated it, "Jo-

seph prospered for he was a lucky fellow," that is, God favored him. So bad luck would mean "God is against me"; and that is not true.

And it is not due to circumstances. Any man who has been in the world knows that circumstances may put great hindrances in the way of righteous conduct, and we all learn to take them into account in estimating the quality of conduct. But yet experience shows us that, for most people, at least, there are no circumstances that are necessarily fatal to a comfortable religious life. There are no valleys so dark that the sun of divine presence has not reached them with light. No sorrows that divine consolation has not alleviated. No temptations from which a way of escape has not been found.

And it is not because we are in the immature state; not yet far enough along to have comfort. I know that as we do not expect the beauty and fragrance of a rose while in the bud state, so we do not expect the mature graces of Christian life in the young. No

doubt we shall know more of God's goodness ten years from now than we do to-day, and we shall learn more about the ways of sin, and the weakness of humanity than we do now. But we may now have peace and comfort before the thought of God.

No, it is not these things, but it is sin that lieth at the door.

IV

What, then, is this sin which is charged with so great offense? The story pictures a great beast crouching outside the door to spring upon us when we go out. But we may not press the figure of speech too far. Sin is not something apart from ourselves. We may not lay our faults upon Satan. Poor Satan! he has a hard time enough without loading him with our faults. "Temptation," said James, is when we are "drawn away with our own lusts, and when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

The thing that is most impressive about this matter is that it exists everywhere among

men. Read what all the ancient books say and we find it. Go to whatever people you please and you find in the language, and in the laws, and in the religions evidence that they all had to reckon with SIN.

Sometimes they dealt with it as we might think very foolishly, and sometimes very leniently. It was too often condoned but always condemned. It was always regarded as a ground for some sort of penalty. It always stole some of the sweetness out of life. It always called for a mighty remedy. Every ancient temple and altar will tell us that story.

And we find further that it does not consist in any particular class of deeds; for what some have called sins, others have called virtues. Just as what we call life makes grass, and flowers, and fruit, and yet is not itself any one of these but is in them all, so this sin takes a thousand forms and shows its presence in a thousand ways, but yet it is not itself any one of them. It comes into all lives at times. It makes visits too frequent, and stays too long each time. And how

manifold expression it has had in each of us! Different in each from its work in anybody else, and yet from the same root it all grew.

You see that men are not long-faced and sad-hearted because the minister says they ought to be so, nor because the Bible says they ought to be, but because they — we — have this something in us which leads us to do that which we condemn ourselves for doing. The very day that we begin to think honestly about ourselves and the naked facts of life, we know that “Sin lieth at the door” in this matter of irreligion, this lack of God in our consciousness. We go to business and this is hovering about us. We go home from business and it enters to mar our comfort in the sacred precincts of our family. We go to the church and it injects a minor key into our songs and a plaintive tone into our prayers. We go into our closet to pray and it lays its hand on our head when we would lift our faces to our heavenly Father with gladness, and bows them down like a bulrush, and when we would say, “I thank

Thee," it makes us say, "O God, forgive me." Even the most saintly of men and women who through Christ go triumphantly into heaven, say as they go, "I go a sinner saved by grace."

Such a thing needs further exploration. When we examine it we find that the first source of this trouble is in a *too exalted self*; self above God; self-comfort above our neighbor's comfort. For example, if a man cheats in business he does it to get more for himself. If some woman misrepresents another she gains a temporary pleasure by it. The boy who hurts another does it because, for the time, he puts his pleasure above the other boy's comfort. In the larger circles of life the same is true. If any minister goes wrong he first puts a selfish aim uppermost. If any congressman has failed in duty, I do not say in judgment, it is because he sold out his duty for some personal temporary advantage. In church someone wants his own way more than he wants peace. The subtle insinuating influences of this unduly exalted self are the constant forces with which

we contend, and the source of all our wrongdoing to one another. Given that sort of self exaltation you can foretell all the other evils of life.

So when we seek to overcome the evil we shall not succeed by trimming and pruning our lives, but by getting at the very root of the trouble.

The Saviour was truly the great soul physician. He could diagnose a case correctly, and prescribe effectively. He said, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me." He put His finger on the sore spot. Again, He said the remedy for the whole of these troubles so far as man with man is concerned is, "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you." Put the other man on a level with yourself. Pull this exalted self down to where the other man lives. Let self get down from the place it has usurped and let the neighbor sit with him in the throne of life. In the language of business "live and let live." In trade not to want all the profit. In society not to want all the honors. Two little boys were trying to ride a

rocking horse. It was too small for both of them. One of them said to the other, "Don't you think that if one of us should get off, *I* could ride better?" That is the philosophy of self. "Don't you think if one of us should go out of business, I could make more money?" "Don't you think if one of us should withdraw, my candidacy would have a better showing?" "Don't you think that if one of us would yield I would feel better?" We smile at that version of it, but is that not a good translation of the idea?

And the remedy in these cases is for us to get off our half of the time. This undue exalting of self above others is the near source of our being out of joint with God, because He has made the world for a different sort of adjustment.

The philosopher John Mill said he thought that love might be in the moral world something analogous to the attraction of gravity in the material world. A sort of force which holds it all in order, and makes the spheres move in harmony. How love

always regulates the family, and the school, and the church! It will regulate the world as well when it is brought to bear on it. And if a man objects to love he exalts himself above others and shows sin again. It is God's way that men shall love one another. To exalt self against others is therefore to exalt self against the spiritual law of gravity, and against God. That is SIN.

V

“Do thou rule over him.”

There is a tone of hope for us all in that. It sounds as if we could, if we put ourselves into the case earnestly, make ourselves right with God again. I would emphasize this strongly because we so easily fall into the habit of thinking, “I could not help it.” I am not at all saying that we are sufficient of ourselves to help it, but we are never left to ourselves in this matter. God is always waiting to help us. What He says here and everywhere is that we can be right with our God if we will try. There is a “lifting up” for every down-hearted man; he may find

peace with God, and have victory over sin. I do not say that sin will be annihilated and that it will never more disturb his life; but I say that he need not to be a servant of sin. But it does require resolution and effort. The spirit this story would infuse into us is one that says, "I will rule over the sin," and that means, "I will rule over selfishness, and love my neighbor. I will enthrone God in my heart."

Mr. Ruskin somewhere expressed his idea that a man who was enthusiastic in sin was more of a man as a man, and more of a success as a man, than he who is indifferently interested in righteousness. And the Scripture says as the voice of God, "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."—(Rev. 3:16.) Our story calls for downright earnestness in this matter. We can blame none but ourselves if we stay in the long-faced, sad-hearted, unreconciled state of mind toward God and our fellow-man. "O taste and see

that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Ps. 34.)

If there be some reader that feels himself estranged from God, and the countenance of his heart is fallen, we say there is every inducement for him to have a "lifting up." God is waiting to help. Let him summon all his resolution, and say, like the Prodigal son, "I will arise and go to my Father." How many countenances have been gladdened by that resolution! It is simple; it is not hard to understand. But it calls for determination. "Sin croucheth like a lion at the door, and to thee is his desire, and do thou **RULE OVER** him."

We have information about it.

We have exhortation to do it.

We have coöperation of God in it.

What we need is resolution to undertake it. We repeat it. "O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed are all they that trust in Him."

Prayer.—Lord Jesus we pray Thee to help us to find in our own lives the root of anything

that hides Thy face from us, and shuts out peace from our hearts. And help us with a determined mind, and an obedient spirit to put away every weight and every sin, and have the "lifting up" of heart and countenance that is worthy of us and of Thee.

GOD'S INTEREST IN OUR
RELIGION

SUGGESTION

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not his son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.—JOHN 3: 16, 17.

CHAPTER IV

GOD'S INTEREST IN OUR RELIGION

WE sometimes hear it said that a man cannot do business now and be a Christian. I am not in business, and probably do not know all the trials of a business man, but I do not believe the statement is true of legitimate business. Religion, as we are thinking of it, is the sense of harmony with God in life. But life is only the succession of events that come to us. The great majority of men are in business of some sort. The events that come to you are business events; that is your life. If you cannot have a sense of harmony with God in business, then you cannot have it in life, and it is not worth anything.

We always come to the verse of Scripture quoted on the opposite page to this with a feeling that this is the place where the foun-

tains of our emotional life will be opened afresh. As we begin to turn toward it in our Bibles we begin to feel that softening of heart which comes when we are going to some place of tender sorrow. And far be it from any of us to become callous to that influence. The feeling life is the fountain of our will power. In the last analysis we must feel or we shall not act. But at this time, for special reasons, I write about this very warm-blooded passage in a very cold-blooded way.

I

What does it actually say, and what does the saying mean? "God loved the world." What does it mean to love? I am sure you are saying, "That is a very simple if not silly question. Everybody knows what it is to love." But it is, after all, a very difficult word to define. We can illustrate it, but to define it is not so easy. Yet definitions are important. They are like lighthouses for the mariner; they do not shift with the winds or tides of feeling but are fixed and reliable.

We must separate the idea of love from the idea of delight in. There are some people who are so kind, and sweet, and inspiring to good deeds that we like to be with them. They do us good in heart. They are like the showers on the meadows; they freshen and encourage all our good propensities. We say, "How loveable they are." It is a pleasure for us to do things for them. We say we love them. But a closer analysis of these cases will show that in this feeling we only serve ourselves. We enjoy what they contribute to our comfort of body or mind. Our feeling toward them is a proper and refined appreciation and gratitude for favors received. It would be more accurate to say, I appreciate, or, I admire, or, I enjoy so and so than to say, I love them. We are simply thankful cisterns; reservoirs which can think and speak; receptacles of good which is given to us by them. Now whatever name we may call it by, we all see that this is not the kind of feeling that our heavenly Father has toward sinful men. He is not delighted with the world. He is not receiving from

the world, though He desires to receive their affection. His feeling is of another kind entirely. We must have a word of a different meaning.

Again, His feeling is different from parental feeling. A mother has regard for her child. She may not delight in all that the child does, but she gives her time and service to the child because it is her child. If the child is not what it ought to be she not only bears with it but covers the faults with the mantle of obliviousness. That is because it is her child. It is in a way a sort of self-delight. If it was the child of some other woman she would not cover its defects, nor bear with its faults as she now does. What she bears in her own she dislikes in others. Without intending to belittle this feeling we must say that it is in the nature of an instinct for the preservation of the race. If it were not for that, children would get too little care, every child would be an orphan and a waif. In this particular, human parents are like animal parents. There is a great difference between

this feeling and the love spoken of by John.

Love differs from affection. We say of a child, that she is affectionate when we mean that she gives expression to her esteem in agreeable ways,—that is desirable, but it differs from love.

There is another sort of feeling. A woman of refinement and home instincts leaves home and country and goes to a foreign land — say to Africa — to be a missionary. She lives amid scenes that hurt her continually. She gives up minor desires that she may make those people better and happier. She does not delight in them. She does not have affection for them at the first. But a definite purpose to do them good because they need it fills her mind and heart. Paul left honors that his countrymen would have given him to become a subject of bitter persecution that he might make others know the goodness of God. That is different from delighting in the idolators. The other feeling is rooted in the desire to receive from others; this has its roots in the desire to give to others. The other kinds get their inspira-

tion from the goodness of others; the better they are the more we delight in them, the more affection we have for them. This kind gets its inspiration from the badness of people. The worse they are — one might almost say — the more we are pressed on to do them good. “The greatest exercise of love is to love the unloveable.”

We may say, then, that love is the constant endeavor to make the bad, good; the unloveable, loveable; the unhappy, happy.

“Holy love implies something of higher ethical value than emotion; it implies a principle of action that controls all thinking and willing and doing. It denotes the self-imparting principle, that quality in the nature of God that impels Him irresistibly to give Himself to others.” (Vedder’s *Socialism and Ethics of Jesus*, p. 358.) That describes what is in the statement, “God so loved the world.” He has such a feeling of interest in the world that He constantly seeks to make the unloveable, lovely; the bad, good; and the unhappy, happy. That makes it possible for Him to love those that He does

not delight in. He can love sinful men with the tenderest love, and yet be pained at heart over their evil doings. He can even bring great sorrows upon them while He loves them tenderly.

I have dwelt upon this that I may make plain the truth that our Father may love some of us whom He does not delight in. He may love us, and yet be grieved at our sins. He may send, or permit great sorrows to come upon us and yet not be angry at us. It may all be done with the desire to do us good. We associate pleasure with love so much that we can hardly think of loving without it, and when the object of love ceases to please us we are liable to cease loving it. But His love is constant. It has no tides, nor floods, nor droughts. And the measure of His love is not the pleasure He feels, but what He does to make us loveable. To love is to do things; often to suffer pain in the doing of them.

II

“God so loved the *world*.” The emphasis is upon the extent of the love. Paul said

that, "Scarcely for a righteous man would any man die; perhaps for a good man one would even dare to die." That is a common estimate of human love. It is limited to the good. But the love of God commends itself in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. All the sinners in the world are the objects of God's active endeavors. There were plenty of men in those days who believed that God loved the Jewish race. Jesus would not have gained anybody's attention nor opposition by saying that. But He said God loved the *world* — all the sinners in the world. All the national, and racial, and theological boundaries are wiped into oblivion by that saying. He has not two faces. A racial religion cannot be a God-given religion. God is one, not two. Wherever there is a man His active endeavor to make him good goes on. He did not delight in the nations that opposed Israel, but He loved them. He was not pleased with the crowds that thronged the heathen temples of Rome, but He loved them. He is

not happy over all that we do, but He loves us all.

And if He loved the world, He loved not only that part of it which was then in existence, but He loved all the world all the time, for He is the same yesterday and forever. That is, He is now — to-day — active in bringing all the world to a knowledge of Himself, for that is their highest good. We may not always recognize His activity. It is not likely that we do, except in a small way. But this implies that He is endeavoring to get hold of every man in America — everyone, the writer and the reader — to make him a good man. Let us not allow the individuality of that statement to be disagreeable to us, nor make us hesitate to accept it.

I am sure everyone would gladly do something this very hour to make anyone in the world better; and we are only finite. Our God is not restricted by time nor distance, nor by anything except the unbelief of men. Is not He more ready than we? The

Father whose radiant face enlightens heaven, not only would help if we asked Him, but He is seeking to help when we do not ask Him.

III

What has He done to make us religious?

What has He done to make me better? What endeavor has He put forth for me? He has made us all capable of understanding and loving Him. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our souls are restless till we rest in Thee." The soul of man is orphaned unless it has a sense of God. There is a great place in the heart and life which is not filled unless men are trustfully obedient to Him. No matter what consolations men have they receive a new sweetness when His help comes. Friendship of God excels all other friendships. Our work, when we do it as unto Him, is more cheerfully done than at any other time. Music and art reach their highest because the contemplation of God is a larger subject and hence inspires to better things. What a work of love it was that we were made capa-

ble of appreciating goodness! Sometimes — sometimes — O that we could say all the time — we can see the beauty of goodness. Truth, and honor, gentleness and kindness, loyalty, patience, and love appear glorious to us. We say in our souls, “How I wish I could have more of these things in myself.” Well, it is a great blessing that we can thus see beauty in such graces, that we are capable of delighting in them. It is a blessing that we can enjoy music when we cannot make it. There is a wonderful organ in Grace Temple in Philadelphia. It took a great man to build it, and another to play it. Some of you have heard “The Storm” as it is rendered there. It is a great goodness that you can appreciate it, though you could not play the organ. It is a great thing that we are able to appreciate goodness in others who are better than we are. The man that goes through the streets of a town and says, “Here lives a good man; there lives a good woman; this is a good child,” — that man, I say, has something of goodness in himself or he could not see it in others.

I once talked with a country blacksmith. He was pouring out streams of bitterness at church members because some of them owed him a York shilling or so. I said to him, "Suppose you give them a rest now and tell me what you think of Jesus." He replied, lowering his voice, "Jesus!—if we had more like Him we should have a happier world." It shows something great in a man when he softens at the thought of Jesus. I can endure it when a man speaks against the ministers, for I know we are an imperfect lot; I am sorry when he speaks against the church members, for I know that if he knew them as well as I do he would think more of them.— But when a man speaks well of Jesus I begin to like him, for I know that he has good in him. We may enjoy a painting when we cannot color a wood-cut. We may rejoice in architecture when we cannot plan a woodshed. So it is a great thing to enjoy goodness even when we do not have much of it. But God has made us all so that we cannot only enjoy good people, but everyone of us is capable of being good. Let us

take that into our deepest thought. God has been from the first so anxious for us to be good that He has made us all capable of it. "Of his fullness have we all received and grace for grace"; and "to as many as believed on Him to them gave He power to become the children of God."

This idea, that God made us all fundamentally in His image, underlies the reasoning of the New Testament. It is our normal condition. We may have a poor idea of ourselves, but the cheapest of us has all the moral equipment to be a good man. All the affections that a good man has are at least rudimentary in us. The love of truth, gentleness, faith, reverence, manliness — everything which we find in the New Testament as marks of a good man are germinal at least in the worst man. The wheels, so to speak, are all in the man, though they may not be in good order. That much God has done for each one already. Goodness is made possible. Potentially we are all saints, though actually we may come short of it.

But another thing He has actually done

toward making us good is that for centuries He has kept special agents in the world to prepare the way for One who would save us. No one denies the history of the Jewish race in its main features. Abraham was the man of God from whom sprang a nation that was, until Christ's time, a constant and shining light to help men to be good men. Notwithstanding the faults of individuals the temple services, the civil institutions, the moral principles, the splendid examples of the Jewish people, held up to the world a light which kept back the darkness of heathenism. The spiritual idea of God was found nowhere else as pure as with them; the idea of righteousness in conduct was the highest; the hope of men was kept alive and comforting; the family life was high and noble; the idea of one God has been fixed forever.

No unprejudiced man can read the Bible and not feel that a divine One was in some way in the history, trying to make the world better, and preparing the way for One to come who would be a great Saviour. All

the best ideals were cultivated there in that little country. Through the whole history God was working to impress on the world at large, and for the world at large, things that make for its good. That history was dominated by the expectation of a coming Messiah, a Saviour who should bless the whole world. It was God loving the world. The Old Testament that lies on our tables is a witness that for centuries God was interested in preparing for us a word of hope and a work of love.

Christ came to advance the same undertaking. I will not stop here to ask you to understand what He did, but only to recall it. That wonderful person whose word the winds of heaven obeyed, whose bruised and wounded body the king of terrors could not hold in captivity — he spent his time and strength with men pleading with them to be reconciled with God. He preached to men the noblest kind of living. That Sermon on the Mount, if men would follow its principles, would make a world of delight. The lofty ideals it furnishes, the kindly spirit it en-

courages, the calm trust in God it inculcates, the unlimited charity it teaches, the courage it inspires, the unswerving loyalty it requires, make it the completest condensation of morals in the world.

And then the parables of Jesus give the same kind of teaching set in concrete forms. They explain, they enlist the sympathies, they awaken the emotions, they set the will in action.

Then the promises are abundant.

The life He lived was so humble, and sane, and sound, and good, that all who know of it desire to have more of it themselves.

And finally that perfect loving life was freely surrendered on the cross at the appointed time to the Roman executioners for the sins of the world. I do not attempt to explain the mystery of that atonement, for I cannot fathom it myself. But this we can all see, greater love He could not have had than the love He there showed. Divine love must somehow be expressed in human measure, and that was the largest measure He had. But the result of it we are abundantly told. We

are "justified by His grace through the redemption that was in Christ Jesus." "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." All that sacrifices were thought to do in Israel He did. All that human thought can ask another to do He did in that death and resurrection. He suffered death for every man. Some of that suffering was for you and for me. Some of that endeavor to get men back to God was for you and for me, because He loved the world and we are a part of the world He loved.

And He has kept the organized church in the world for the sake of bringing the world to know that His love is world wide. Through the storms of political trouble the Church has lived and preached. Amid the dangers of internal weakness it has had a recuperative strength which has kept it until now. When we read church history we recall the word of Jesus about it, "The power of the grave shall not prevail against it." So to-day the Church, held together by no fictitious issues but by the spirit of service to the world, is holding forth the invitations

and encouragements that Jesus gave to bring men to God. Every church tower, every bell that rings its call to prayer, is a call to come and take the water of life. Every procession of people wending their way to church is a witness that God is still helping the world through His Church.

But this is not all. The most impressive thought is that after all these things the voice of God comes to individuals urging, and helping them, when they do not at first recognize Him. As we think of it how wonderful it seems to be! We are going along in the common course of life, and there comes into our mind a sort of vision of things, a new view of ourselves, which changes the whole tenor of life. It was not a man's word, it was not something we thought out, but it seemed to come up in us though not of us. It had no voice to speak to our ears but it had a message to our hearts. Or it may be we have committed ourselves to the Christian course of life. We have been trying to rid ourselves of evils, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And there has come

a strange power in our hearts that subdued us, and that made the evils to shrink up as if some blight had touched them. The sins that had been our masters somehow lost their power over us; and we feel that something greater than ourselves has worked within us to will and to do right. All these things are His works in us. It is the personal discipline, by the personal God. The individual manifestation of the individual love God has for every individual of us. I cannot express my thought about it. It often subdues me into silence. To think that this voice in me, this power that helps me, is the personal God taking note of me. I am sure you will understand how such a thought, if a man has it, moves him. The psalmist said, "When I consider the heavens the work of Thy hands, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

The great climax of His goodness is,

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God."

Now these are the practical every-day things that show the love of God for the

world. In all our thinking about the subject of religion this must be taken into our account. If we think of our sin, it is to be measured by what He has done. If we think of our weakness, it is to be encouraged by what He is able to do in us. If we think of our destiny, it must be in the light of such love. The whole problem of life must be considered in the light of this: "*God so loved the world.*"—God so loves me, that He has set in motion all these things to bring me to be a good man here, and to have a glorious life hereafter.

A lawyer who had fallen under the power of drink was aroused to his danger and resolved to be free. He told me of a fight he had with it in his office in which his better self conquered. Afterward he thought he ought to help his fellow-men, so he went about lecturing on temperance. He was not consciously a religious man. It was late in August. He was going down the valley of the Chenango on the D. & L. R. R. The sun shone from the west; the golden grain waved in the breezes. And as he sat look-

ing out on the beauty, there came over him the thought of God who made it all. He had seen the grain before, but he had not seen God in it before, and he was led to say in his heart, "O God I thank Thee." Then he went down to Sherburne, N. Y. to a lecture. All the churches were in the work of temperance, and the ministers were on the platform to give him their support. The Methodist minister, after reading the Scripture, supposing of course that a man in that work was a religious man, turned and said, "Mr. Burdick will lead us in prayer." He had never done such a thing. For a beat or two his heart skipped. Then he rose and prayed as only such a man in such a circumstance could pray. He was committed to God then and there. God had been following him when he knew it not, and now brought him to see who was leading him. God is interested in your religion and mine more than we know. He has followed us. He has called us. He will follow and walk with us, and He is able to save us. I pray you do not think, nor say, without dissent

when you can courteously make it, that a man cannot be religious in business. God so loves the world now that whoso believeth in Christ His Son may begin at once the eternal life.

Prayer.— Lord help us to see Thy constant interest in us. Help us to believe in Thy power. And keep the thought of Thyself and Thy goodness daily with us.

THE EFFICIENT SAVIOUR FROM
IRRELIGION

SUGGESTION

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—LUKE 2:8-11.

The life of Jesus is the knot in which all the previous history is gathered up, and from which the threads of succeeding events again diverge. In that single figure all previous development finds its sufficient explanation.

—PROF. RAMSAY.

CHAPTER V.

THE EFFICIENT SAVIOUR FROM IRRELIGION

IN former chapters we have said that life is incomplete without a sense of God. That the sorrows of irreligion are due to faults in us; that our heavenly Father has a constant abiding interest in our being religious in the best sense.

I write now about the Efficient Saviour from Irreligion. In the story of Jesus' birth a noticeable characteristic is the absence of what we might at first thought have expected to find there.

We are not told that the angel said, "Unto you is born a sociologist." I suppose there is no influence in the world so potent to change sociological conditions as Jesus. One of the best of writers has said that the Christian Church has made the whole social problem. It presents new ideas of men's re-

lations to one another that must sooner or later find expression in social relation. But Jesus did not pose as a sociologist.

The angel did not say, "A great philosopher is born unto you." Probably there was underneath Jesus' life and teaching a true — the only true — philosophy. As the centuries pass and men try to discover the relations of things a system of philosophy is evolving. I heard the great philosopher, President Schurman of Cornell University, speak for an hour and a half in simple language about the most abstruse subjects, stating the philosophical truths that are now established by consent of all. And every statement is but another form and vocabulary of principles that emerge every now and then in Jesus' teaching. But Jesus did not stand forth as a philosopher.

Neither did the angel say, "There is born a moral teacher." Yet what moral teacher has taught a higher morality, or done more to bring good morals into practice than He? Some of you have read Herbert Spencer's book "The Data of Ethics," which

made quite a stir among teachers. He sought to find outside of the New Testament some fundamental ideas for the regulation of human conduct. You noticed that every datum he laid down could be stated in fewer words, and quite as clearly, in texts from the New Testament. And yet Jesus did not write a book on ethics.

The angel did not say that "a political redeemer was born that night." But Jesus has always been a political redeemer. It is true to-day. Every throne in Europe feels its foundations tremble unless the principles of Jesus are being followed. England's throne is secure because there the people rule the throne, not vice versa. In Russia all the government either is awake, or sleeps with one eye open for fear; and its foundations will be shaken in proportion as its people come to know the teaching of this One whom the angels announced. But Jesus did not lead a political party.

The angel did not say, "A great theologian is born." But Jesus was a theologian. Theology is the science of God, and Jesus

knew God better than anyone else knew Him (Luke 10:22). He revealed Him more fully than any other source of information had done. He knew more of His plans than all men put together. But there is no system of theology set forth in the New Testament. A good theology shines through it all and beautifies it, but one would feel that to call Jesus a theologian belittles him.

No! The message was "This night is born a Saviour."

I

And to be a Saviour he must touch the source of our trouble.

And our trouble is not fundamentally sociological nor theological. A man may have the comfort of religion in very poor sociological conditions. The majority of Christians are in such conditions now. When a man's money is gone, and his health fails, he may "walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil." He may stand in the presence of the specter of death and not pale with dread. But if he have not

God he is in trouble. To be destitute of a guide in life's pathway; to be without an unseen companion; to have no definite hope, — such things are the sorrows of life that a Saviour must assuage if He is efficient. And the whole situation of some men is condensed in one word. I do not like to use it, for it has a meaning I do not intend. It often means to be low and wicked, but I use it in its true meaning — the man is *God-less*. He is lacking in a sense of God — that makes the trouble. And the only one who can be a Saviour for us is he who can put God back into men's hearts again.

Henry Van Dyke has parabled this thought in a beautiful story which I may try to condense.—

The story runs that in Antioch in the 4th Century, a young man who had been disinherited by his rich father for joining the Christian Church, was by a magician promised all happiness if he would let him blot out the name of God from his memory. He consented and therefore left the Christian Church and went back to his luxurious home.

His father was dying, but in his dying hours reinstated his son and then begged him to tell him the religion for which he had formerly left home, for, said he, I am dying and it all looks dark to me. But his son could not remember the name of God. Later the son married the girl of his choice and afterwards came to great prosperity and honor. And then in the moments of their happiness he and his wife talked together in this fashion. Hermas said, "There is something that oppresses me like an invisible burden; something undone that is needed to complete everything." And she replied, "Yes, I have felt it. What we need is gratitude. There is no perfect joy without gratitude. Not to have it is like being dumb with a heart full of love. Let us go and give thanks." So they went into a grove, to a forgotten shrine, and Hermas said, "Fair is the world, fairer still is the life in our breasts. Life is abundant within us. For all good things we thank"—but there was a blank in his mind, he knew no one to thank. He looked for a face and saw a void. He sought for a

hand and clasped vacancy. The bell swung to and fro in his heart but made no sound. All the fullness of his feeling fell back from the empty sky, cold as snow, frozen and dead. There was no meaning in his happiness. No one had sent it to him. There was no one to thank. Then, his little son was injured and lay unconscious and beyond their cure. Then they said, "Let us try and pray"; but when they were about to do it the name of God was gone. There was no one to whom the prayer could be addressed. Then in the midst of all their luxury they said, "We are poor, we are destitute, we are afflicted. In all this house, in all this world, there is no one to help us." Then the Presbyter John came and comforted him saying, "I will tell you the name you have forgotten. It is the name of God your heavenly Father." Then the boy awoke and Hermas was saved.

I know of no more accurate presentation of the case of those who have no religion than that. No one to thank. No one to help. No gratitude for favors! No assurance of safety! And no comfort unless

God can be restored to them. In all ages whenever men have been without the consciousness of God, and have not taken Him into their calculations, the real glory of life has departed. Not only do men's fears grow into large proportions when they have no God to deliver, but the fragrance of every flower evaporates, and the fruitfulness of every field shrinks, and the beauty of every prospect changes to decay, without the glowing sunlight of religion. I do not say my religion, nor do I say my theology, but Religion. That trustful submission to God as he is known to you,—that is the sun of life, and without that the mid-summer sun shines but dim, the fields strive in vain to look gay.

II

The terms "lost" and "saved" are pregnant with meaning. They are familiar terms, but when we attempt to state what we actually mean by them we have difficulty. Sometimes we see great mountains dimly from afar, and through haze or mists. Are there trees on those mountains? I do not

know. Are there terraces at the base, and brooks running down their sides, and mineral wealth within? Do they mark the boundaries of states? Are they important elements in the weather? To all these questions we must answer, "I do not know." "And yet you say there are mountains there?" "Yes, I know there are." Well, that is strange; you know there are mountains but you know almost nothing definite about them. "Yes, I know certainly but not definitely."

So in this matter of "saved" and "lost," we know with little definiteness, but we know with certainty. Of the lost Jesus said, "They go into outer darkness, where there is the weeping and gnashing of teeth." It is said the Prodigal had desperate hunger in a far country. The servant who had hidden his napkin had his talent taken from him. And the "goats" went into everlasting punishment. All these words are indefinite but positive. We may say that such people did not turn their hearts Godward in life, and the last we know of them they were facing

away from Him. It is a matter of direction, of attitude. Where that direction leads to we do not know. What will come of it we cannot tell. "Lost" is the New Testament word. The Son of man is come to seek and to save the "lost."

We do not mean when we say that a man is "saved" that he is perfected. Paul said, "Not that I have already attained or have already been perfected, but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." The last people to claim perfection are those who call Jesus Saviour.

Nor do we mean satisfaction. Christians are not discontented, but they are never satisfied with themselves. Like the psalmist they all say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness."

But it means that a man has been brought into right relation to God, and right attitude toward Him. He is not now among the disobedient and the untrustful. Whatever his sins may have done to put him in hostile relations has been overcome, and he now trusts God with his whole heart.

Of the saved it is said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be but when He appears "we shall be like Him." Again it is said, "Eye hath not seen, but God hath revealed it by his Spirit." And again, "This mortal shall put on immortality." Under all these various expressions there is one thought which gives meaning to them all, namely, to be trustfully obedient to God will end in all goodness and blessing. Not to be so, will end in all sorrow and loss.

When a man is not right with God he may have many blessings for a time, but that disagreement in heart with God will work out his utter failure in life. It will steal away the sweetness of his best pleasures, and sometimes leave him without worth to himself.

And on the other hand, the man who is right with God may for a time endure the ills that come from living in a mixed world, but ultimately he will receive in himself all that an infinitely gracious God provides for those that love Him.

So it resolves itself into this. That man who is now right with God is "saved" be-

cause he is in line with forces which will end in his full completeness; and that man who is now not right with God and remains thus is "lost," because he is cut off from that help which can make him conquer evil. To be "saved" or "lost" depends on our relation to God and our attitude to God as we know Him. Out on the ocean is a great ship and a man has been washed overboard. The captain signals the engineer to stop. The wheelman brings the ship about. A boat is manned and lowered. Passengers rush to the side of the ship and watch the man as he fights the waves with failing strength. They see the small boat approach him with caution, and then a strong sailor reaches him, takes him by the collar and pulls him into the boat. Then all the passengers cry, "Saved, Saved, He is saved!" And yet he is not saved. He is out there in the ocean, among the great waves, and even when he comes aboard the steamer he is far from home. But yet they say "Saved," because the hands that now have him are strong and sure. So a man who has been going wrong, has

buffeted the waves of sin and temptation until he is about discouraged; but now he is trustfully submissive to God as his refuge and strength — he is a saved man because he is at last submissively in the hands of One who is “able to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God by him.” We are saved by hope.

We see a young man brought up in a religious way, who has decided for himself that he will be obedient as far as he knows it to the will of God. That man lives in the presence of temptation and in the sight of sin, but we think of him as a “saved” man, because there is a relation between him and our God which will keep and guide.

And here is another man. He has gone wrong. He has yielded to the evil until it is habitual with him; the fruits of evil are appearing in his heart and life continually. God is not in his thoughts. He is playing the game of life alone, and he is not winning it. But if that man should by any means be put into relation with God, so that the help of many kinds which God supplies can be-

come his help, both we and he will think of him as saved. He has not yet been perfected, as Paul said about himself, but he has his face toward the goal, and God is his helper. He has his faults, but he fights them. He stumbles but he does not fall. His strength fails, but it is renewed like the eagle's. He runs but does not weary; he walks and does not faint. He is "saved."

Now if there is any way by which we may attain the right relation to our heavenly Father, that way becomes the way of salvation, and he who puts us in it becomes our Saviour.

So we may say that a Saviour is one who gives us or produces in us a trustful, obedient attitude toward God, and who puts us in the right relation to God. If a man can have those, he will have hope and courage and ultimate salvation, for God is his. And if he does not have them, how can he hope to do anything but fail? God who has a destiny for him, he ignores; how can he do anything but fail at last? If a man could succeed and not follow God's plan, then God

is no longer God. If some other plan than God's plan is a better success, then God becomes the second best. And if my independent plan is better for me than God's plan, then I am better than God. What conceit that is! Not to have a trustful attitude toward God is to be "lost" with all that implies.

I know of nothing that comprises therefore so much in itself as *To be right with God*. Open that treasure box and see what it contains. It has divine wisdom in place of my short-sighted, and cross-eyed, and astigmatic moral vision. It has help for me in my best endeavors. It has correction for my misjudgments. It has a disciplinary hand to educate me aright. It has a wondrous power working in me to love the right and to do the right. It has defenses for me, a sort of talisman to keep off an hundred ills. It has still more,—this one jewel—the graciousness of God. Who can measure that? "According to the riches of His grace!" That is Salvation! He who brings that is Saviour indeed.

III

And that is what Jesus came to do. He is explicitly called Saviour 26 times in the New Testament, and the thought Saviour is in all the books as the water-mark is in paper. Peter said, in Him we have an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (Pet. 1:4.) John wrote that the purpose of his gospel was to make men know Jesus, and have eternal life. Paul said he waited for a crown to be given him "in that day." (II Tim. 4:8.) In Hebrews we read, "He hath obtained for us eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:12.) So everywhere, in the New Testament while we have great consolations for this life, the salvation he gives can only be consummated in some other and future state.

And history is showing His hand. I had a letter last week from a saint in Vermont, past 80 years of age. He wrote in large

letters with the signs of age in his trembling hand. And at the end he wrote across the page in one line and large letters CHINA, and under it he says, "China is on the screen, and God is handling the slides." That is fact. This great upheaval has come about by the leavening influences of Christian teaching for fifty years; Sun Yat Sen, who was made the provisional president of the new government is a Christian man. Who can foretell the future?

And it is a fact of immense importance that of all the religions mentioned in the Bible all have died except the Christian. We read of Baal and Ashtaroath, and Chemosh, and Bel, and Nebo; but no man anywhere now bows at their name. We read in the annals of Egypt about Amen, and Kneph, and Khem, and Seti, and Ra and Tum; but silenced forever are their praises; deserted and in ruins are their temples. Of the more modern religions, Buddhism is the most virile competitor of the Christian, and that has ceased to propagate; the marks of senility are already upon it. The only religion that

is growing in all directions is that which this Jesus told His disciples to preach to all nations, and He would be with them to give success.

IV.

And Jesus is doing what He came to do. He is keeping the families that have brought up their children in nurture and admonition of the Lord. Thousands upon thousands of them have taught their children the way of God and they have not departed from it.

And He is restoring the "prodigal sons." Everywhere men who have been in far countries and have come back in sorrow, have been received and pardoned and saved. Indeed few of us but have had lapses when we faced a far country for a little, but when we returned He saved us by restoring the joy of salvation. And everywhere men who have not known God are being brought to see the truth and come into right relation with Him.

And He is working in us to will and do His good pleasure. We find the ties that bound

our affections to some unworthy things are loosened and being fixed upon heavenly things. We have steadier faith and greater joys. The old sins and prejudices have gone where the frosts of spring go. Somehow the sun of His grace has shone upon the whole field of our life and made every good thing to grow. Our sympathies are broader, our view is clearer, we live more of the time on the higher planes of life. We feel the oncoming of that time when all the ice will be gone and the summer of the Christian life will be in full blossom.

Yes, a Saviour was born, and He lives and works efficiently.

And this being true, may I not urge you to give the matter thoughtful consideration? There are many blessings that come to us in the press of business; flashes of heavenly light in the midst of gloom; but there is a kind of comfort and help that can come only to those that can get a quiet meditative hour, where they can consider God's goodness; when they can feel themselves alone with Him. When they do that their vision gets

clearer, their way seems plainer, and they feel themselves to be in the care of a Saviour.

Prayer.— Lord Jesus, accept the gratitude of our hearts for Thy great goodness, and work in us continually the sense and joy of Thy salvation unto eternity.

TWIN CONDITIONS OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

SUGGESTION

I taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.— ACTS 20:21.

“In religious evolution there are necessary moments of destruction, when old ideas seem to crumble. But they do not crumble: they merely change their form. We remake them for ourselves.

“When the Divine Power manifests itself to a man, he knows it, and it becomes to him a possession forever, to rule him or to destroy him.”

CHAPTER VI

TWIN CONDITIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

THERE are two places in the record where we get a view of what Paul considered central in his own preaching. One is in the 15th. of I Cor. "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared" to many. Those were the objective historic facts about Christ Jesus which men must know before they could be expected to believe on Him. They tell what He did for our help.

We have already considered Jesus as a Saviour, and that is what Paul was speaking about among all the peoples where he went. But to be a Saviour, He went through these experiences of death and resurrection.

When Paul was leaving his last message to his beloved church at Ephesus, putting into short form what was vital to their welfare, he stated what men have as their part to do in being saved. He said, "I testified repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." That was his central message to men on that point. We know that Paul was much more than an evangelist. He taught the churches their duties to their fellow-men. But here, when he is making what he thought was his last address to them, and is summing up what were the vital conditions on which they could obtain the blessings of the religious life, he puts into bold prominence two things — repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having discussed the inestimable value of religion, I now desire to set forth these twin conditions of obtaining the blessings of the Christian religion. And at the outset let us notice that what a man must eat for good health and strength is regulated, not by a depraved taste, nor by the fancy of a French cook. There is a vital relation between the

food and his body that must be considered. His food must supply what his body needs. Pickles and candy do not make a strong young woman. Pies and ice-cream do not make athletes. The farmer knows that some crops will grow in sandy soil and some in clay. He does not plant corn in soil not fitted for it unless he supplies the deficiency in soil by artificial fertilizers. It is as true in the religious realm as in the other that there is a vital relation between what is required to have a religious life and what the religion itself requires. Paul did not teach us to do anything that the religious life itself does not by its very nature demand. The needs of a congregation are not met by the eccentricities of a pulpiteer who chooses his theme to fit his variations of sentiment without reference to the needs of the people. There must be a relation of his preaching to their conditions and aptitudes. The preaching must fit the people's needs. Paul said to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:2), "I fed you with milk, not with meat, for ye were not yet able to bear it." He gave them, not what someone

told him he ought to give, but what he thought was a necessity for their conditions to make them grow strong. He taught them what they needed to know. This same idea of relation between what is required of us, and the nature of the case, is underneath the preaching of repentance and faith. They are the only things that can do for men what is necessary to give them the blessings of religion.

And these same things remain the fundamental necessities for us of this day. Human nature and the divine nature being such as they are, no other terms can possibly meet the case for us. Irreligion is Godlessness, that is, life with God gone out of consciousness. To cure irreligion then is to *put God back into His place.*

Let us consider then repentance toward God, for religion has God in it centrally.

I

But first I want to call attention to some of the incorrect ideas of repentance common in men's minds, judging from the use they

make of the word. (And except the word "faith," I suppose the word "repentance" is most frequent among those who talk about the matter.)

One of the common definitions is "*sorrow for sin.*" That is incomplete, and it misleads. One can be sorry for sin and not be repentant. I suppose there are many people who are sorry they spoke unkindly yesterday, or were crooked in business last week. A boy might be sorry when his father punishes him — he ought to be. Men are sorry they were impure in their early life. But that is not religious repentance, for it does not put God back in His place. And there are others who know they have been long time in the practice of immoralities and yet they cannot make themselves sorry for sin; — they know it and are not sorry. We have three elements in life. They are not to be thought of as entirely separate; but yet every act has three elements. The first, a knowledge that something has been made known as right; that is in the realm of intelligence. The second, a feeling of oughtness about it;

a certain inward pressure to do it; that is in the realm of the feelings. The third, the actual movement of the self in the line of the duty; that is the realm of the will.

No one, I suppose, thinks that repentance is in the first realm — the realm of intelligence, but many think it is in the second realm — the feeling realm. They emphasize the sorrow definition. But I think that we shall see that it is not there, but in the third — the realm of the *will*. It is something that we can do, something we ought to do, something that gives us discomfort if we fail to do. Those who heard John the Baptist preach said, — not, How shall we feel? — but What shall we do? At Pentecost men were pricked in their hearts, but they said, What shall we do? The Jailer at Philippi said, What shall I do? Repentance is not feeling, but a decision to do. All must climax itself in action of mind or heart or hand, if any permanent results are to be obtained.

There is another insufficient definition of repentance. It is called, "*Turning over a new leaf*"; but that is not complete. A man

can turn over many new leaves and not come in sight of what Paul is talking about. A man might say, I will swear off drinking, for it threatens my health and my business; I will stop smoking, for it is expensive; I will become honest for it is the best policy; I will be kinder in my family, for it begets a better state of things; I will keep the Sabbath for it has a civilizing effect. Now all these are valuable, and not to be despised. Any community will be improved if many men would turn over a lot of new leaves to-morrow; but they are a long way from the high position of Paul's "Repentance toward God," unless they turn over to the leaf where *God* is written large and plain. Reformation is not repentance for it does not put God back in His place.

Another definition is, "*About Face. Go the other way.*" That depends on whether a man was going the absolutely wrong way before. There are many men who are not going the opposite way; they are headed about northeast instead of due east toward the sun. If they are hostile to God then

“about face” is repentance, but if they are only indifferent to God then about face does not meet the situation.

What Paul preached, and what we need is this, put in a short form — *Enthroned God in your heart*. Just that and nothing more is repentance. There may be experiences of various sorts that lead up to that. A man may have sorrow for sin. He must have had some dissatisfaction of soul or he would not be interested in the subject at all.

II

Suppose a man has a ship, all his own, and he is to sail from Philadelphia to Liverpool. He has studied navigation and knows the parts of the ship and their function; so he holds up his head and says, “I can sail this ship. The river is wide and deep. Before dark we shall pass Cape May and have a whole sea before us.” He has heard the tales of seamen that have been shipwrecked. He knows the losses of insurance companies that have come from such wrecks. He sees

the shores marked by the flotsam of ships lost at sea. But he thinks he knows it all and says, "I will sail alone. This is my ship. What is a captain for if he cannot sail his ship?" That man is like the unrepentant. He is independent of guidance. He may or he may not be hostile to the requirements of morality. He may or he may not be rebellious to law, but he is unrelated to God in his own consciousness. He "plays it alone."

But here is another man. He too has a ship and he must sail a voyage; but he feels the responsibility. He says, "I have my fortune in this ship. My family and my friends are upon it. The fortunes of other men are involved. What can I do? There may be shoals and sunken rocks and crooked channels that only an expert knows. I cannot go alone." He says as Moses said in the early days, "Let me not go unless Thy presence go with me."

Now he is told that the government has had the river charted, and the rocks and reefs all marked, and guidance is furnished to se-

cure safety. And he says, "I recognize the wisdom of government, and I will not cast off a hawser, nor weigh an anchor, nor signal a hint to my engineer, until the government wisdom is mine. I can wait but I cannot sail independent of government."

Now that attitude of the captain is repentance toward government. It is a matter of heart attitude. It might be that he has tried alone before and failed, then he would be sorry. Or he may have lost time, then he will hurry. But the inward submission is repentance. So when a young man seriously thinks of his life responsibility — it may be to care for a family and rear his children; when he sees the wreckage of souls; when he hears of the dangers; and in his soul says, I cannot go without God, then he is repentant toward God, then he is like Samuel when he said, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth"; or like Paul when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That puts God back into his heart where He belongs.

III

And now the other condition — *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the distinctive mark of the Christian religion.

We have written with the understanding that religion was used in the broad sense; used to mean the experiences that men have in their submission to God as they know Him. In that sense there is much religion among men. There may be repentance to his God by a heathen. And there are very joyful experiences to those that have not our ideas. The psalmists of the Old Testament had such.

President Garfield once said that the difference between the successful and the unsuccessful man is due to a small amount of difference. Nine-tenths of what all business men do is identical. They all invest money; they put in their time; they ask credit and give credit; they meet some losses; they take some risks. But one man has a little more foresight, or a little more energy, and he makes money where others just live along.

Now that extra thing is his "margin," and that makes success. All the religions have some good, but the Christian religion has a large margin of excellence above all others that makes it *the religion par excellence*, and that margin is Jesus Christ. This is now being recognized. Formerly when a missionary went to China he told them they were all bad; their religion was all of the devil, and they were all doomed to eternal misery. Now he says to their leaders, "Let us reason together. We have much in common; we are all mortal; we are going on to judgment; you have reverence and so have we; you have repentance toward your gods and we have toward ours. The difference lies in our ideas of God. Let us compare ours with yours. Our God lives, does yours? Our God helps, does yours? We have God manifest in Jesus Christ." That is the margin of the Christian religion — Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, to go back to our captain. When he wants to sail he says, "I want government help; who is the pilot that I can trust?" And when a man comes aboard, he

shows his certificate, and then the captain gives him the wheel. He takes orders from the pilot and gives them to the ship's crew.

Now there are various pilots, so called, who are ready to wreck us more or less completely for the honor of being pilots. There are Buddhist priests, and Mother Eddy, and Mr. Dowie, and Brigham Young and the Pope at Rome claiming to be divine pilots. But a wise man says, I want a certified pilot. And there is none but Jesus. I take Him as God's anointed Saviour for me. I take the chart He brings. I sail my craft under His guidance. I have repentance toward God, and Faith in Jesus as God's certified pilot. He is to me for practical life as He was to Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Jesus is the full powered Ambassador of God. To so receive Him gives a man the Christian religion. Paul therefore says, "*Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This faith is abiding confidence in Him and His teaching as that which our great divine Father desires us to do. Steer your course, it says, by the Christian chart.

Someone may say, How am I to have faith in one whom I have never seen? And that is a fair question. I should say first that we have the record of His teachings. To have faith in Him is to accept His teachings as the chart of life. It is not essential that we know Him personally, or see Him in the flesh (John 20:29). If we know the principles He taught and accept them as our guide that is faith in Him. He said, Why do you call me Lord and do not the things that I say? And again at the last part of the Sermon on the Mount He said, He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, is the man who builds on the rock.

I do not say that the fullest faith is the acceptance of Him merely as the divine Teacher — that however is genuine faith. Someone has lately said that he believes in the teachings of Jesus, but he does not believe in the person of Jesus; and that many people seem to believe in the person of Jesus who do not believe in His teachings. If there could be any such difference, the man that believes in the teaching so that he fol-

lows it, has the more substantial element of faith. He may lack the comfort of faith, but he has the guidance of God and he will get the reward of it. He has salvation, though he may lack the joy of salvation.

The other part of faith is a sense of Jesus' personal companionship. This is the comfortable side of faith. Some people, some of the time, have a very strong sense of the companionship of Jesus. A very godly man in Saratoga Springs once said to me that he often walked home from his store with a feeling that Jesus was with him and he might have touched Him with his hand. Others with not so much sense of the almost physical presence have what they cannot express better than to say with Prof. Gilmour :

He leadeth me, O blessed thought,
O words with heavenly comfort fraught.
What ere I do, where ere I be,
Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me.

That is the climax of earthly faith; it makes the Christian religion glorious above all others. But not all have that. Such

things are for those who can so receive it. But the other — the joyous endeavor to follow Christ as God's voice to us — that is faith such as Paul preached.

IV

I am not specially trying to persuade men to faith, but I cannot, in justice to my own feelings, utterly omit a word of earnest exhortation.

There is such a wondrous pilot for our lives. God called us into existence. He keeps us; He calls us; He is infinitely wise and loving. He knows the course and the storms. By every argument of duty, of gratitude, of self-interest, we are exhorted to enthroned this God of all good as our King, and to take Jesus as the certified Pilot of life.

The twin conditions are before us. Are they ours? Can we say that we are sailing our ship with Jesus as pilot, and accepting Him as the God appointed One? Then we are in the experience of the Christian religion. We may be meeting storms, and adverse

winds. The voyage may be long, but we
may rest secure —

“Not in doubt will be our journey’s ending,
Sin with its fears will vanish at the last,
All its blest hopes in glad fulfillment blending,
Life will be with us when the death is past.”

THE STEADY TENDENCY OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

SUGGESTION

But we are all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.—2 COR. 3:18.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

CHAPTER VII

THE STEADY TENDENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

PAUL is writing to the church at Corinth about several subjects of importance, and among others he is replying to someone that had been telling the church that Paul was not a duly accredited minister — he was not really ordained at all, the apostles of Jesus had not appointed him — he had just come along there and preached. Someone had raised the question whether he had any credentials.

Replying to this he says in substance. This is very strange that you should want from me some letter from somebody to assure you that I am really a man to be trusted. You yourselves are my letter of commendation. If anybody asks how you know Paul is preaching the truth, ask him how a man

cured of a grievous malady knows that the doctor that cured him is a good doctor. Should such a man come to his doctor and say, "Doctor, they are saying you do not know your business; that you are a quack. Are you really a good-for-nothing?" The doctor would say, "John, were you fooling somebody when you sent for me?" "No, indeed, I was not, I had been sick for days and was getting worse." "John, did you take the medicine I gave you as I told you to?" "I certainly did." "Did you get any relief?" "In four hours I began to improve and got well rapidly." "How are you now, John?" "I am very well indeed." "And now you come and ask me if I am a quack!!! It seems to me if there is a quack in this case it lies between you and me, and it is not me."

That is Paul's line of thought. And then he goes on to tell them why he preaches with so much confidence; why he uses such great boldness of speech. He says, When Moses was here he preached a message that was from the glory of Mt. Sinai, yet its result on

men was to overwhelm them in despair. It might well be called a "ministry of death." And you think he was justified in speaking boldly. But my message leads on not to death but to a glorious likeness to Christ. Shall I not then be justified in speaking boldly? And now he turns aside from his main thought to speak more fully about the character of his message.

"We all beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord"—that is, the Christian believers see in the gospel a reflection of the glory of Christ. They did not see Christ. We do not see Him. But in the story of His life and redemptive work we see His glorious character, His wondrous love; and seeing it—that is by seeing it steadily—we are changed into the same image. We take on the same character and disposition. But it does not come at once, but "*from glory to glory,*" even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The theme of this chapter grows out of this word of Paul—The Steady Tendency of the Christian Religion. And you see the

direction of this tendency is toward Christ-likeness in feeling and character.

I

All the Christian religion is regulated by the inner purpose to be good men. A man has an apple tree. He sees it grow from a little shoot up to a large tree. Some of its energy is expended in spreading roots; some in making strong limbs that will bear great weight; some in leaves that will grow and fall off; some in beautiful flowers that last a week and are gone; some in fragrance that the wind blows away. And then comes luscious fruit.

“Those delectable juices
Flowed through the sinuous sluices
Of sweet springs under the orchard,
Climbed into fountains that chained them,
Dripped into cups that retained them,
And swelled till they dropped, and we gained them.”

But from the first swelling of the seed in the ground, up through all the experiences of years to the ripened apples, not an hour, and not an experience of that tree was unmindful of the purpose in that tree. When its leaves

came out in spring, we saw the purpose; but when the leaves fell in autumn, and when the sap froze in winter, the purpose was always there. Apples! Apples! Luscious Apples!

So all the experiences and teachings of the Christian religion are animate with the purpose to be Christlike. Change men into His image! Change them into His image! In times of joy, and in times of sadness; in times of seeming advance and in times when it looks as if he was forgetting; in all times the steady tendency is — to make a man Christlike. Recall the teachings on that point. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man which built his house upon a rock." (Matt. 7:26.) "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (John 8:31.) "If ye abide in me and my word abide in you, ask what ye will." (John 15:7). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 13:14). "Let that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5). Such are the finger

boards that point the way in the New Testament. This is the standard with which true measurement is to be made: how much real honest goodness has ripened in our hearts? This is the gold in the ore that gives it value. We can endure much stone and sulphur if there is gold at last. We can overlook lack of culture, and much ignorance of theology. We can get along with queerness if only we see that people are good at heart; Christlike in dispositions; people of faith in God, and love to men.

'And I want to reemphasize this because we are all the time liable to substitute some other aim. This is a great time for organizations. We have been a lot of single denominations, each going its own way with the Lord, and quite contented to do so. But now circumstances seem to point to some responsibilities that call for united effort of all the Christians from California to Maine, and Canada to the Gulf. And we have been numbering our Israel. We talk about "denominational consciousness" less than about "Christ consciousness." We are tempted

to think that bigness is the same as goodness, and that organization is the same as sanctification. Sometimes churches build new houses, or pay off old mortgages, and they are tempted to think that paying and praying are identical. Some ministers who get great congregations and gain great numbers — and for that we may be thankful — are liable to think that a house full of people is equal to a people full of faith.

All these subsidiary successes are the flowers and leaves of the tree, but unless the real reproduction of Christian goodness comes from them they are blasted blossoms that fall and get no fruit. So when men complain, as they sometimes do, that the churches are not promoting Christlikeness, we must say in all sorrow: If that be true, if our influence in the community, if the influence of our meetings on those that come to them, is not such as to be thrilled through and through with desire to be thoroughly good, then it fails to be Christian, for that is the aim of the gospel. We must see to it that our Christianity is more effective.

II

But our text tells us not simply what ought to be but what is the result of our Christian faith. We all . . . beholding . . . are changed into His image. That is the actual fact. If we read the letter to Corinthians carefully, and see what sins were rampant there, and then see what Paul taught them, we shall see that they must have moved up to a higher plane. Look at some of the historic events. In Thessalonica, we are informed, they turned from worshipping idols to the worship of God; and that wherever Paul went men told him of the great results of the gospel in Thessalonica. They suffered persecution, and yet rejoiced.

The missionary, Dr. Bunker, told us of a heathen village that he visited in Burmah. It was dirty, and the people were dirty. He stayed there a few days preaching this gospel of God and a few of them saw in it the glory of God. And then Dr. Bunker went away. It was two years before he was able to return, and when he did a most remarkable

thing took place. Those people have no song in their hearts, and so in their heathen state they have no singing. But when he came back he sent word he was coming, and as he came in sight of the village he was greeted by the sight of a little chapel they had built, and in front of it were a company of children in two rows, one on either side of the path, all clad in white, and as he came they sang some Christian songs their native teachers had learned and taught to them. Their lives were tending toward Christ-likeness.

Dr. Richards, the missionary to Africa, told me that he had been some years in one village, and that the natives had so little regard for property rights, were so prompt to borrow, and so forgetful about returning, that he was afraid that they might take all that he had. He hesitated to translate the New Testament words, "Give to everyone that asketh you," for fear they would ask him for everything. But he decided to give them the truth and abide the consequences. And they did come to ask. One wanted his

butcher-knife, another his coat and another something else, and he gave them until he was badly crippled in his stock. But to his delight the next morning the chief brought back his knife, and by night all his goods were restored. After that they asked for nothing. He could leave a coat for a month hanging on the veranda while he was away and no one would touch it. One night when he was my guest, as I was locking my house, he said, "In my African village I do not lock my doors, they are all Christians there."

Dr. Paton going to the Aniwa Island in the New Hebrides group found the people cannibals. When they wanted a good feast they cooked a white man. But in a few years he left them well-trained Christians.

But let us not think that these results are all in semi-barbarous lands. All China is being thrilled with new hopes of life because men, that saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus have been beholding it and been changed into Christlikeness in heart.

I have seen neighborhoods in cities, where noise and fighting and drunkenness abounded,

taken in hand by some Sunday-school man. At first he had ragged and disorderly crowds, but soon order came out of chaos, quietness prevailed. The school became so much Christian that they felt like keeping out the ragged and disorderly and it was necessary to start a new work in another place to keep in touch with the lowest, neediest strata of people.

Let the gospel get into any family, or any community, and it will bring in the Christian kind of feeling.

I am not forgetting the imperfections of us all. But any fair-minded view of the case will show that those who really see and accept the gospel, move always toward a Christ-like life — as Paul says, “*From Glory to Glory.*”

III

Another matter worth our notice is the transforming agency in all this work — “*Beholding the glory of the Lord.*” That is, by discovering that the Lord is glorious they are changed. Sometimes we have visions of

the glory of Jesus. He seems to us the very chiefest among ten thousand. Now it is a principle of our life that we are always lifted up, or put down, by that which we think is glorious. A boy who thinks the vicious hero of some dime novel is glorious, has already gone a long way towards a vicious life. The man who thinks some unscrupulous politician is a glorious fellow, is well trained in crookedness already. And, on the other hand, the man who sees a good man as glorious is on the way to goodness. To see such glory in anyone is to take him as an ideal, and ideals make the men. It is the natural working of our make-up that we try to be like what we think is glorious. Now, says Paul, they who see Jesus as glorious, and steadfastly look at Him are changed into His image by the looking. John has a similar idea when he says: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It is a common fact of life that children are predetermined in life by their surroundings — the things that make

the deep impressions on them. If then a child somehow comes to see Jesus as glorious, that decides the trend of life. In one of the large stores in Cincinnati, they had a white marble statue of a Grecian woman. It had a beautiful face. The hair was combed back and fastened in a graceful fashion — far better than the wild fashions of our day. One day a little girl clad in poor clothing, with hands and face dirty, her hair unkempt, entered the store. She came up before that marble woman with a look of startled surprise. For some time she looked at it, and then involuntarily she smoothed back her hair with her hands. She came in again next day, and again and again, until the clerks noticed her; and each time she was more tidy, her face and hands cleaner, and her hair combed back from her fine brow. She had seen the glory of that statue and it was transforming her life. So the surroundings, the mental and moral atmosphere affect us all, for men are only grown-up boys.

This beholding should be specific, not general. When men seek health in some foreign

climate, they seek one that is suitable to their ailment. One goes to the mountains, another to the sea, another to Canada. When men want to engage in raising any kind of grain or fruit, they choose climate, and cultivate soil to match their aim. If a man is studying French, he picks his books and companions among the French. So our Christian common sense, seeking to perfect our Christian life, seeks that kind of special cultivation that is needed. The man of emotional temperament needs building up in the ethical side of his nature. The cold logical man needs to come under the morning sun of the emotional truths, that the frozen blood in his veins may become warm blood. And his discipline, his self-discipline, needs to be specific, not general in its character. If a man is quick-tempered, he should do those things that help such quick-tempered men as he is. If he is sharp in speech, he should do what cures that specific fault. We may spend too much time in little frivolous details about Bible history, and too little in getting true

ideas of Jesus' moral image. It is not so much matter what mountain Jesus sat upon when He talked about the Beatitudes, but it is of great importance that we see the gentle, trustful, peace-loving spirit that is under them. It does not matter greatly whether we know just how Satan tempted Jesus on the mountain, nor just how Satan took Him to the pinnacle of the Temple; but it is very good to see His reverent, obedient spirit, and His resolute dismissal of the temptation.

The great need of us all is clearer, juster views of Jesus. We see the glory of His tender mercy to the poor sinners that came to Him, and that is good. It makes us more tender to see this in Him. But one may see glory in that and not see the glory of Jesus in His patience with the slowness of his own disciples to understand Him. I think we ministers need to see that. We are in such a hurry to see men do just right that we get irritated and sometimes discouraged at the delay. We need to behold that feature of Jesus.

And we may need to see His glory in the activities for men's welfare. We may need to see his indignation and injustice.

IV

And this transformation is progressive: "*From glory to glory.*" We sometimes hear about sudden cataclysmic experiences in which men say they have become "perfectly sanctified." Well, we may get light on that by asking those who live with them. I knew of a woman in Cincinnati that posed as a "Saviour." She gathered a few weak people about her. Someone asked her husband if he thought she was a Saviour. "No," said he, "I have to live with her." Those who claim perfection are usually lacking either in moral integrity or in fine moral perception. The transformation here spoken of is not sudden but progressive, because the discovery of the glory is progressive. Just as one sees new beauty in a landscape every year, and hears new music in the songs of birds each returning season; and new glory in his children as they unfold like rose

buds, so Christians may see new glory in Jesus as they continue to behold Him. The first disciples saw Him as a wondrous healer. "We never have seen things like this before!" they said. Then they stayed and heard Him preach and they saw new glory. Such truth as He uttered! Such holy ideals as He set forth! He is the most glorious of teachers! He speaks as one having authority! And then when He went to the cross and the tomb and came forth from the grave, they said, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand," "Let the angels of God worship Him." So now our passing years give us new ideas of His glory; and each new phase awakens new tendencies in us toward His likeness.

v

Suffer me a word of earnest exhortation. If you were to examine your view of Jesus to-day, what are the elements in it that appear glorious? One of our questions to the 300 ministers we at the Seminary are trying to teach by correspondence, is this one:

“What are the things that move you most in the preaching you hear?” A man last week replying, said, “I am always most deeply moved by what one man suffers for another.” Is that what moves you most? Or is it the beauty of his faith in God? Or his readiness to forgive? Or his confidence in humanity as redeemable? Or his breadth of love? Which is it?

Let me exhort you to behold Him intelligently and steadfastly and hopefully, and you will be transformed into His image.

Some years ago I was in a photographer's room, and a little child came in for a photograph. The artist put the child in a chair, and adjusted his camera. It was in the old times when they needed time exposures. Then he put a sensitive plate in the camera. “Now, my child, sit still. One, two, three, four, five! All right now.” And that sensitive plate had taken on the image of that child! From it pictures were made for all the friends. That was a wonderful thing to me. But I thought of this text and it is

far more wonderful. If one, with a crabbed, suspicious disposition, could go and look at a fine portrait on the wall, and come out with his own imperfections of disposition gone, and the regular, manly, noble expressions of that picture had somehow been made his own, especially if the wrinkles in the brow, and that suspicious look, that guilty look, that hang-dog expression that sometimes comes, that glum, lowering, fault-finding, pessimistic look which at times clouds men's faces—all that gone, and the open countenance, and clear, steady eye, and cheerful smile "that doesn't come off" had come in its place, what a wonder that would be! If gazing at some portrait could do that for us we would take an hour's treatment before it daily.

And yet wonderful as it may seem, that is what Paul says happens to the man's disposition, his moral face, who steadfastly beholds the glory of Jesus. If we can find time each day to think of Jesus' glorious character and let it clear the atmosphere of our hearts for

a little while we shall find it will change us into His image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Prayer.— Lord Jesus, when thou wast on earth the blind came to Thee and Thou didst touch their eyes and they were made to see. Open, we pray Thee, the eyes of our hearts that we may see Thy glory more clearly, and may thus be transformed more into Thine image. May our dispositions become more like Thine, and our lives follow more carefully Thine example.

THE GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

SUGGESTION

Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.— I COR. 15:57.

The day of resurrection
Earth, tell it out abroad.
The passover of gladness,
The passover of God
From death to life eternal,
From earth unto the sky
Our Christ has brought us over
With hymns of victory.

— JOHN OF DAMASCUS, 8TH CENTURY.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

PAUL wrote, "I show you a mystery." A mystery is not something hard to understand, but it is something hard to find out. It is something that no man could himself find out, but when he has been told he sees it to be a most reasonable and natural thing. The event of which Paul writes is one that must have been revealed or we should not have known it. Knowledge of what will come to us after death lies beyond possible human discovery. One chapter of Paul contains the statement of the mystery; and it gives us the picture quite fully so far as it concerns our religious hopes. It does not answer questions of mere curiosity, but it tells what the heart wants to know. And when Paul has presented the picture of that

great culmination of the Christian economy, he breaks out in thanks to God, who through Jesus has given such a splendid triumph to his cause. I suppose there was a radiance of glory to that victory, partly because the Christians at Corinth were living in persecution, and that was the lot of them all at times, and to tell them of such a triumph was to bring them a message of great joy. But as we think of it, the glory of such an ending is more full and glorious to us than it was to them. The lines of its beauty may be different for those who in the safety of modern liberty of opinion think calmly about it; but they are not less brilliant nor less satisfying. Paul looked out from one sort of trial, and took courage when he thought of the Resurrection. We look out from different surroundings, but we look at the same event. That is to be the culmination of our Christian endeavors. Let us consider somewhat broadly the Glorious Triumph of the Christian Religion.

I

The first triumph for us is the victory over our irreligion. We have before spoken about irreligion. It is not hostility to Christ or to God. It is not immorality. It is not inhumanity to man. It is living without any conscious relation and trust toward our Father in Heaven. It is God-less-ness, lack of God. And such a lack leaves us without the best inspiration to life, without the best comfort in sorrow, without any satisfactory guidance in conduct, and without any key to the riddle of our existence. And as the dawn of our consciousness of Him comes on we are filled with anxiety, it may be with fears, because though we recognize Him, we are not reconciled to Him.

This may in this practical age seem to be rather inward and psychological, or to use the older word, experimental. But the facts of religious life are always inward at first. Our relations to God are the first concern when once we think of the deepest things. The old-fashioned question used to be,

“Have you made your peace with God?” That question was not framed in a theological seminary. It grew up in the hearts of men who had been troubled with a sense of fear or anxiety, and then come into rest and peace. It is what Jesus had in mind when He said, “Ye shall find rest unto your souls.” To triumph over this great fear, to come out of that great darkness, to get into harmony with God. That is the great initial victory of the Christian life.

It is not all of it. It is not a large part of it, but it is vital. Once a man has settled his relation to God, life has a destiny, his voyage has a haven, and a chart, and a pilot. Rest unto your souls! O you who are

. . . tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without.

If you would take Jesus' yoke,—take Him as your teacher and master, you would have rest of soul.

We may not all expect to understand everything that the New Testament says, nor all that Christians say, for their words are

only signs of experiences, and we must have the experiences to fully understand the words; but let me state them. Paul said, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." Again he said, "The Kingdom of heaven is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." "I beseech you therefore be ye reconciled to God,"—and reconciliation must mean to be brought into that state of mind in which we are satisfied with His character, His aims and His methods. Again he prayed that men might have the peace of God that passeth all understanding. And in Romans 8, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." God is thus put back into proper relations to life.

So Christian people have always felt. In New England, when Jonathan Edwards was the great pulpit light, people generally thought that orthodox ideas were the heart of orthodox religion, and so the experiences of the heart had less attention than the exercises of the head. To have "assurance" was not called "sound" theology. But

Mrs. Edwards knew the Lord and His peace. She wrote: "People may call this blessing by what name they please, it makes no difference to me whether they give it a name or no name, it continues a blessed reality, and thanks to my heavenly Father, it is my privilege to enjoy it."

Spurgeon said: "I went around like a wounded deer, carrying the arrow and its pain with me, but when I looked unto the Lord I found healing." President Steele said, after a great trial to find rest: "My joy at first has subsided into a delicious and unruffled peace." President Finney of Oberlin wrote that after he had yielded himself to God, the whole world took on a new look, the birds sang more sweetly, the skies looked brighter. One writer says, "Immediately there came to me great peace." Another wrote; "Somehow I lost my load." Another; "When I yielded, peace filled my soul." The quaint old evangelist of New York, Elder Chamberlain said: "Somehow I fell in love with God and His people." An old minister in Illinois said he felt as if

he could "walk on eggs and not break them." And Bunyan's poor Pilgrim is represented as coming along with the mud from the Slough of Despond still on him, climbing up the hill wearily, with a pack like a Jew peddler's on his back — the burden of his sin. And he comes to the wicket gate and knocks, and is admitted to the way of salvation. Then he gets instruction from the Bible, and now he goes up the way to a cross, and there his burden falls off and he sees it no more. That is Bunyan's way of telling about his victory. These experiences are not studied forms, they come as the endeavors of common people to tell what they have experienced. When we come to the more studied expressions they generally take the form of hymns; and our books are replete with such hymns as —

"When peace like a river attendeth my way," etc.

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine," etc.

"When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes."

II

But I have said that this peace with God is the initial victory, not the full or final one. As Jesus won His final but not His only or His greatest victory over Satan on the Mount of Temptation, so the Christian has other and greater victories after he is at peace with God.

The Christian wins victory over his own wicked habits and thoughts and feelings. One of the evidences that men have truly become Christians is that they live after a new fashion. We never expect a man to continue quiescent under evil habits after he becomes a Christian. He feels a new impulse to the right, and he puts off the old man and puts on the new man that "after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4: 24.)

In spite of all that has not been conquered, a fair view of the influences of the Christian religion will convince that its history in individual souls, or in families, or communities, is one of victory. As the years pass,

they that keep in touch with the Lord and His word, come to think His thoughts after Him. The crudities of their theories of life, the deficiencies in their thinking, the inconclusiveness of their reasonings, gradually yield to His truth until they see and announce the wisdom of His ways.

And, more to the point, victory is won over the feelings. Men not only restrain their speech but they become kind at heart. Professor James, quoting a literary man's words about another popular writer, says: "I used to think he watched himself, and would not allow his tongue to give expression to antipathy or complaint; but after long observation I satisfied myself that the absence of such was real. He did not say unkind things, for he did not feel them." We all know people that have taken what we may call a thorough course of Christian treatment, and they have become sweet, and patient, and charitable and long-suffering. Paul's list of what Christian love will do, as given in I Cor. 13, is subject to daily verification in any community. They that are

buried with Christ do rise to newness of life — perpetual newness — growing life. “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?” “This the victory, even our faith.”

There are philosophies that oppose this religion. Men in their thinking attempt to construct theories of the world that will account for what is. They are constantly correcting their theories and as time goes on it is becoming evident that the idea of creation that underlies the Bible statements, after they have been clearly stated, and the idea of the latest philosophy, are approaching one another and they will ultimately be co-terminus — just alike.

So there is a psychology that seeks to account for the varieties of Christian experience. They say that Paul, trained as he was from childhood in ceremonialism, and being what he was in his mental ability and temperament, could not have had any other kind of a conversion than he did. He must fight. He was not an unresisting sucker to be pulled ashore easily. He was like the

pugnacious trout that will bend your pole and test your line before you land him. While John, they say, was different. Educate a child for it, they say, and you can make him either a Buddhist or a Christian. There is much truth in this. Religion is in large measure a matter of psychology. It is an inner experience at the root. But there is more than psychology in Christian experience, there is an established order in the soul life. The man who sows seed and cultivates well will get flowers by established laws. He can foretell his crop. So in the religious life there are laws that in an orderly way work to make men Christian. But there are exceptions. Just as Jesus made wine at Cana by a short process, and yet did no discredit to the usual way; just as He healed the sick by unusual methods, without discrediting the laws of health, or the honor of medical science; so He did in Paul's case, — and He may in others — put out the hand of His power, and brought him to penitence by a short method without discrediting the way of early training and persuasion. Pro-

fessor James, who was not writing to defend Christian theories, calls such cases as Paul's, the cases of "supernaturally regenerated people."

And there is victory over mammon. And mammon is not mere love of money. That is miserliness, or greed of gain. Mammon is love of what money buys. The man that loves luxury and the kind of honor that wealth brings is the man whom mammon controls, and the one for whom Jesus contends. Riches are not signs of dishonesty. We know men that cannot buy a night's lodging who are dishonest as they have an opportunity to be; and we know men that have made great wealth by honest means — and they are not subjects of mammon. Money in the hands of good men is great power. We may be thankful that our country is a money making country. May still more of it be made! Nature and opportunity are enriching us. But may we have grace to be its master and not its slave. And religion is winning its victory over

mammon very rapidly. Thousands of men and women are consecrating money and heart to good things.

III

This religious faith is the victory that triumphs over circumstances. Paul and Silas, shut in the inner prison with feet in the stocks, could sing to God. Bishop Latimer could say to Ridley as they were going to be burned at the stake: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley. Play the man; we shall this day light a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust will never be put out."

Samuel Rutherford in prison in Scotland wrote his friend,— "Believe me, brother, I give it to you under mine own hand writ, that whoso looketh to the white side of Christ's cross and can take it up handsomely with faith and courage, will find it such a burden as sails are to a ship, and wings to a bird. I find that my Lord hath overgilded that black tree and hath perfumed it, and oiled it with joy and consolation. My

prison is a palace to me, and Christ's banqueting house." *

The cry for wings is old as humanity, wrote Hannah Smith. Our souls are made to mount up with wings. What are these wings? Their secret is contained in the words, "They that wait upon the Lord." If we fly high enough we escape every snare laid for us.

But no Christian man need to go away from home to find victory over circumstances. Our churches have many who know what contented minds and triumphant spirits can live in most trying surroundings.

IV

But a greater victory still is the victory over death. There are two phases to this victory. One is that in which we think of death as the penalty for sin. In that sense death has no fear, for Jesus died for our sins. He offered the satisfactory expiation, whatever that may have been. In Him we

* Rutherford's Letters, pp. 128, 140.

are considered as having ourselves been crucified, and in His resurrection, as having been raised. Much of the Scripture language is based and framed on that idea of death. It is figurative and hard to grasp clearly, but the outcome of it is plain. There is now no element of penalty in death for the Christian man. The whole attitude of men toward death is changed. He delivered them that through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage.

The Christian that can read his privilege clear has no need to fear death. He may shrink from the physical fact, he may not be willing to part with friends here, and to leave family without him, he may want to stay and complete tasks he has undertaken, but death as a penalty is gone from his thought. "The sting of death is sin." But if sin is forgiven there is no sting. A man who shrinks from going to Sing Sing as a prisoner, might not hesitate to go as a citizen. One might be willing to go to Siberia to live, who would fear to go as a prisoner. The well-instructed Christian knows that there is

no condemnation to him. He is justified freely by His grace. No temporal afflictions are penalties. Neither sorrows nor adversities, nor sicknesses nor persecutions, neither things present nor things to come are penalties. There are consequences or natural results. There may be chastenings, but penalties none. "He bore our sins and by His stripes we are healed." When the prodigal son received the kiss of forgiveness, he was not sent out to atone for his wanderings by hard work. And that is a great triumph. Even though death as a fact remains, its terror is gone — it has in it no sting. We may approach it —

"Not like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach the grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams."

The other phase of death presents it as the ending of life.

Mere taking away of fear of death as penalty does not give us assurance of future. But this chapter tells us not only that death

has no sting, but that the grave has no victory. Death does not deprive us of anything.

Rev. Thomas Armitage, forty years pastor of a church in New York City, was feeble for some months before his death, and I visited him occasionally. He said to me one day: "I have always been perplexed by the fact that the Bible speaks so unconcernedly about death, but now I know why. Death does not interfere with anything of real value to me — it is utterly powerless."

An aged minister at whose dying bedside I sat said, when I spoke about death, "Oh, it gives me no concern more than to pack my satchel and go to visit my children. In a few days I shall be with my wife and some of the family."

Mr. Moody said once when a friend was expressing sympathy with him at some loss of property in the Chicago fire: "Oh, it has not touched my real property, that is laid up where moth and rust doth not corrupt." Luther when he had grown old said, "I pray the Lord will come forthwith and carry me

hence. I would readily eat up this necklace (which he was holding) for the judgment to come to-morrow." And so the evangelist said, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

We do not cease to be. These throbbing souls of ours with their love, and praise, and their holy ambition, go right on. Not a noble purpose but will be forwarded there; not a holy ambition but will have its gratification then. The Christian fellowship will become purer and stronger. James and John were brothers according to the flesh, then brothers in Christ, then brothers in the Apostolic Commission, and now they are fellow-laborers in some holy cause. If there is anything plain about the resurrection of Jesus, it is that He was the same Jesus — the record makes that certain. He continued His conversation along the same lines; He picked up the thread of His instruction where He had laid it down. Angels said, This same Jesus will come again. Jesus, the name His mother used, when she said, "Jesus, mother wants you to come in." His whole intercourse with them was like a

continued story — one chapter ended on Friday to be continued Sunday — and another chapter ended at the Ascension to be continued at the Resurrection, and the story may be broken into other chapters. Our partnership with Him has begun — it will not end —

“Death like a narrow sea divides
The Heavenly land from ours.”

But when the waters of Jordan open for us, we take ourselves, with whatever of love and hope we may have, over with us, and continue our life — on higher planes, and with greater victories, like orange trees moved from New England frosts to Florida's soil and balmy skies.

V

But if we could see all Christian charity ruling in society, so that bitterness and envy, hatred and malice, greed and cruelty were all banished; if men should come to love their neighbors as themselves; if business was so organized that there would be no unjust inequalities; if agriculture was so developed

that mother earth supplied an abundance for all, and society distributed it impartially, surely that would be a good victory. And that victory is to come. We are taught to expect that His Kingdom will come in earth as in Heaven. Here in this chapter we read that Jesus is to have control of our earthly matters until the enemies are all put down — defeated. But great as that victory will be, it cannot satisfy the hearts of men that love Jesus and that love one another. There are inner longings for power, and for knowledge, and for fellowship with the saints that have gone on before, which cannot be satisfied while we are in the earthly conditions. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, because the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of experiences that transcend the power of flesh and blood. For example, we desire to counsel or comfort a friend in China. We cannot do it because of distance and expense. Before we can get there we are not needed. No amount of love among men can overcome that difficulty. Or, we want to know things

about men's souls. We must find them out by slow processes of induction, always liable to error, and always incomplete for lack of facts. No amount of good fellowship, or good health, or good government, can make these slow moving brains of ours know things that take place in another man's mind. We see all things darkly. We should still have a longing for some better organism for our souls. We should long for powers that flesh and blood cannot contain. And then death would come and cut off our activities. Plans incomplete, personal powers undeveloped, knowledge just gained and no opportunity to use it. Bright students for whom parents have labored and prayed, and that have themselves been studious, and have graduated honorably; public men who have thought out problems for the public good, and are ready to get them into practice, die; children born, with all hope and possibility before them, die in youth. How such an ending casts a mist of tears over the brightest of prospects!

But the message of the Resurrection is not

only that death does not end all and that life still goes on. Death is not only the transferring of life to new environment, the transplanting of a soul to new climate, the final victory, so far as made known, is not that this mortal puts on immortality. But these bodies of ours will be *changed* like unto His own most glorious body. No wonder that men have asked, With what body do they come? No man knows more than is stated here, "flesh and blood cannot inherit" that kingdom. But with a body suited to its new environment we shall live and sing.

What can we know about it, we ask? And at once we are thrown back upon our imagination. But imagination is the great force of life in all departments. A man cannot build a new house, nor a woman get a new dress, without enlisting imagination. We do not know in detail the organism that will be ours. It will be adapted to our spirits — they will not be hampered by the slow moving material of these bodies.

I once saw almost a resurrection. A great ugly worm was hurrying along as if going

to a train. It crawled out on a limb of a tree and began to weave its own casket. Then it fell asleep. Suppose some power was ours to talk with it, and we had talked with it. Why are you working so hard to weave that casket? Well, I expect to come out of it by and by. With what body will you come? I do not know. I believe it will be glorious, so I am getting ready for it. And then one of its neighbors breaks in and says, Yes, he is following a will-o'-the-wisp. He is living in impossible imaginings. I am not going to waste any of my time or thought weaving caskets. It may be hard lines for me but I shall meet my death bravely and that will end it. But the other one keeps on getting ready.

Someone took that cocoon and hung it in the house where the sun could warm it. One day a few weeks after I saw it creep out of the casket. It was dripping wet with some sort of fluid. And then there slowly unfolded great wings that had been stowed away like a close-folded silk umbrella. They spread out half as large as my hands,

beautifully resplendent in the sunshine. It waved them slowly in the air to dry them; then it took a few moments' rest, as if it was getting used to its resurrection life, looking around on its new heaven. Then that creature, that had never flown, and had never seen its parents to be taught by them, let go its hold upon the casing, fell back into the air, caught itself on its wings, and went triumphantly away into the sunshine and the fields. That ugly worm, crawling about under foot, triumphing over what men call death. What a mystery! What a miracle!

And if God will do this for a worm, shall we stand bewildered and benumbed with unbelief when He says He will change the bodies of our human nature like unto His own most glorious body? Bodies incomparable, immortal, glorious? God forbid! Such are the elements that make the Christian victory glorious.

In view of this Paul says, Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

